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 Saint Charles Borromeo.

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SAINT CHARLES BORROMEO

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FRANCISCUS CANONICUS WYNDHAM, O.S.C.,  
CENSOR DEPUTATUS.

**Imprimatur.**

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WESTMONASTERII,  
*Die 12 Decembris, 1910.*







PORTRAIT OF ST. CHARLES BORROMEO (BY CRESPI).

*(Ambrosian Gallery, Milan.)*

Frontispiece.

# SAINT CHARLES BORRAMEO

A SKETCH OF THE REFORMING  
CARDINAL

*Carlo Borromeo, Saint*

BY

LOUISE M. STACPOOLE-KENNY

AUTHOR OF

"FRANCIS DE SALES," "LOVE IS LIFE," "JACQUETTA"

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I DEDICATE THIS BOOK TO THE  
MEMORY OF THE

REV. P. F. O'REILLY, S.J.,

THAT, SO LONG AS ANYTHING OF MINE SHALL ENDURE  
THERE MAY ENDURE ALSO A RECORD OF  
OUR FRIENDSHIP AND OF  
MY GRATITUDE



ENCYCLICAL LETTER<sup>1</sup>  
OF  
OUR MOST HOLY LORD PIUS X.,  
BY DIVINE PROVIDENCE POPE

*To the Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, Bishops,  
and Other Ordinaries in Peace and Communion  
with the Apostolic See, Pius X., Pope.*

VENERABLE BRETHREN, — Health and Apostolic  
Benediction.

What the Divine word time and again records in the Sacred Scriptures—that the just man shall live in eternal memory of praise, and that he speaks even when dead (Ps. cxi. 7; Prov. x. 7; Heb. xi. 4)—is specially verified by the voice and the continued work of the Church. For she, mother and nurse of sanctity that she is, ever rejuvenated and rendered fruitful by the breath of “the Holy Spirit who dwells within us” (Rom. viii. 11), as she alone generates, nourishes, and brings up within her bosom, the most noble family of the just, so too she is the most solicitous, by an instinct as it were of maternal love, in preserving their memory and in stimulating love for them. And from this remembrance she derives a comfort that is almost Divine, and that draws her eyes from the miseries of this mortal pilgrimage to see in the saints her joy and her crown, to recognize in them the

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted, with permission, from the *Tablet*.



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sublime image of her heavenly Spouse, and to inculcate upon her children with new evidence the old truth: "To them that love God all things work together unto good to such as according to His purpose are called to be saints" (Rom. viii. 28). And their glorious works are not only a comfort to the memory, but a light for imitation and a strong incentive to virtue through that unanimous echo of the saints which responds to the voice of Paul: "Be ye followers of me as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. iv. 16).

### TO RESTORE ALL THINGS IN CHRIST.

For these reasons, Venerable Brethren, ever since, immediately on our elevation to the Supreme Pontificate, we made known our intention of working constantly that "all things might be restored in Christ," in our first Encyclical Letter (Litt. Encycl. "E Supremi," October, 1903), we have studied earnestly to make all turn their eyes with us to Jesus, "the Apostle and Pontiff of our confession, the Author and Finisher of our faith" (Heb. iii. 1, xii. 2-3). But since our weakness is such that we are apt to be confounded by the greatness of such an Exemplar, we had, through the kindness of Divine Providence, another model to propose, one who, while being as close to Christ as it is possible for human nature to reach, is better adapted to our weakness, namely, the ever-blessed Virgin, the august Mother of God (Litt. Encycl. "Ad Diem Illum," die ii. m. Feb., 1904). Moreover, availing ourself of various occasions to revive the memory of the saints, we have held up for universal admiration those faithful servants and

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ministers in the house of God, and each in his proper degree, those friends of His and members of His household "who by faith conquered kingdoms, wrought justice, obtained promises" (Heb. xi. 33), that we might be urged on by their example "that henceforth we be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the wickedness of men, by cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive; but doing the truth in charity, we may in all things grow up in Him who is the Head, even Christ" (Eph. iv. 14 *et seq.*).

This most lofty design of Divine Providence we showed forth as realized in the highest degree in three personages who flourished as great Doctors and Pastors at periods far apart, but each of them almost equally calamitous for the Church: Gregory the Great, John Chrysostom, and Anselm of Aosta, whose solemn centenaries have fallen in these latter years. Thus more especially in the two Encyclical Letters given on March 12, 1904, and on April 21, 1909, we expounded those points of doctrine and precepts of Christian life which seemed to us suitable for our own times, and which are to be found in the example and teaching of these saints.

### TAUGHT BY EXAMPLES.

And since we are persuaded that the illustrious examples set by the soldiers of Christ are far better calculated to stir and draw souls than words or deep treatises (Encycl. "E Supremi"), we now gladly avail ourself of another happy opportunity which is presented to us to commend the most useful lessons to be drawn

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from another holy pastor raised up by God in times nearer to our own, and amid tempests almost identical with those through which we are passing, that Cardinal of Holy Roman Church and Archbishop of Milan, Charles Borromeo, by Paul V. of holy memory numbered among the saints. And the occasion is not less adapted to our purpose; for, to quote the words of our predecessor, "the Lord, who alone works great wonders, has done magnificent things with us in these latter times, and in His wonderful dispensation He has erected a great luminary above the Apostolic rock, by choosing Charles from the bosom of the Most Holy Roman Church to be a faithful priest, a good servant, a model for the flock and model for pastors, who, lighting up the whole Church with the varied brilliancy of his holy works, shines out before priests and people as an Abel in innocence, an Epoch in purity, a Jacob in bearing labours, a Moses in meekness, an Elias in burning zeal; who shows forth in himself for our imitation the austerity of a Jerome amid an abundance of luxuries, the humility of a Martin in its highest grade, the pastoral solicitude of a Gregory, the liberty of an Ambrose, the charity of a Paulinus—who, in fine, gives us to see with our eyes, and to touch with our hand, a man who, while the world smiles with all its blandishments upon him, lives of the spirit, trampling earthly things underfoot, seeking continuously the things of heaven, and that not merely because by his office occupying the place of an angel, but because he was emulous on earth to think the thoughts and do the works of the life of the angels" (Bull "Unigenitus," Cal. Nov. anno 1610).

Thus our predecessor, five lustres after the death of



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Charles. And now, three centuries after the glorification decreed to him, "with good reason are our lips full of joy and our tongue of exultation on the great day of our solemnity, whereon with the decreeing of the sacred honours to Charles, Cardinal Priest of the Holy Roman Church, over which, by the disposition of the Lord, we preside, a crown rich in all precious stones was given to His only Spouse." Thus we have, in common with our predecessor, the confidence that, from the contemplation of the glory and still more from the teaching and example of the saints, the frowardness of the impious may be humiliated, and confounded all those who "glory in the idols of their errors" (Bull "Unigenitus"). Thus the renewal of the glorification of Charles, model of the flock and of pastors in modern times, unwearied defender and advocate of the true Catholic reform against those innovators whose aim was not the restoration, but rather the deformation and destruction of faith and morals, will serve after three centuries as a source of special comfort and instruction for all Catholics, and a noble incentive to them to co-operate strenuously in the work we have so much at heart, of the restoration of all things in Christ.

### THE CHURCH'S CONSOLATIONS.

It is certainly well known to you, Venerable Brethren, that the Church, although ever in tribulation, is never left by God wholly without consolation. "For Christ loved the Church and delivered Himself up for it, that He might sanctify it . . . and present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy

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and without blemish" (Eph. v. 25 *et seq.*). Nay, when the licentiousness of morals is most unbridled, the onslaught of persecution most fierce, when the wiles of error, that seem to threaten her with utter ruin, and that tear from her bosom not a few of her children to plunge them in the vortex of impiety and vice, are most cunning, it is then that the Church finds Divine protection more efficacious than ever. For, with or without the consent of the wicked, God makes error itself serve for the triumph of the truth of which the Church is the vigilant guardian; makes corruption serve for the increase of sanctity, of which she is the nursing mother and mistress, and persecution serve for a more wonderful "freedom from our enemies." And thus it happens that, when to profane eyes the Church seems to be buffeted and almost submerged by the rage of the storm, she comes forth fairer, stronger, purer, refulgent with the splendour of the greatest virtues.

In this way the supreme goodness of God ever confirms with new proofs that the Church is a Divine work, because in the most painful trial, that of the errors and sins which insinuate themselves in its very members, He makes her triumph in the combat, because He shows in it the truth of the words of Christ: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. xvi. 18); because He proves by the reality the truth of the promise: "Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 20); and finally because He gives testimony of that mysterious virtue by which another Paraclete, promised by Christ immediately on His return to heaven, continually pours out His gifts upon

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it and defends and controls it in all tribulation—"a Spirit who abides with it for ever; the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not nor knoweth Him . . . because He shall abide in you, and shall be in you" (John xiv. 16 *et seq.*, 26 *et seq.*, xvi. 7 *et seq.*). From this fount wells the life and force of the Church; and by this, too, as the Œcumenical Vatican Council teaches, it is distinguished from all other societies by the manifest notes wherewith it is signalized and constituted "as a banner raised up among the nations" (Sess. iii., Const. "Dei Filius," c. 3).

And, truly, only a miracle of the Divine power could insure that the Church amid the flood of corruption and the failings of its members, as the mystical body of Christ, remains indefectible in the holiness of its doctrine, of its laws, of its end; from these same causes derives fruitful results; from the faith and justice of many of her children gathers most copious fruits of salvation. No less clear appears the seal of its Divine life in that amid so vast and foul a mass of perverse opinions, amid such numbers of rebels, amid so multiform a variety of errors, it perseveres immutable and constant, as "the pillar and ground of truth," in the profession of one and the same doctrine, in the communion of the same Sacraments, in its Divine constitution, in its government, in its morals. And this is all the more wonderful inasmuch as the Church not only resists evil, but "conquers evil with good," and never ceases from blessing friends and enemies alike, while it works and yearns with all its soul to effect the Christian renovation of society as well as of the individuals that compose it. For this is its special

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mission in the world, and of this its very enemies experience the benefit.

This wonderful influx of Divine Providence in the work of restoration prompted by the Church shines forth with splendour in that sanctuary which, for the comfort of the good, saw the appearance of St. Charles Borromeo. In those days when passions ran riot, and the knowledge of the truth was almost completely perverted and obscured, there was a continual struggle with errors, and human society, going from bad to worse, seemed to be rushing towards the abyss. In the midst of these errors rose up proud and rebellious men, "enemies of the Cross of Christ . . . men of earthly sentiments whose god is their belly" (Phil. iii. 18, 19). These, bent not on correcting morals, but on denying dogmas, multiplied the disorder, loosening for themselves and for others the bridle of licentiousness, and condemning the authoritative guidance of the Church to pander to the passions of the most corrupt princes and peoples, with a virtual tyranny overturned its doctrine, constitution, discipline. Then, imitating those sinners to whom was addressed the menace, "Woe to you who call evil good, and good evil!" (Isa. v. 20), that tumult of rebellion and that perversion of faith and morals they called reformation and themselves reformers. But in truth they were corrupters; for, undermining with dissensions and wars the forces of Europe, they paved the way for the rebellions and the apostasy of modern times, in which were united and renewed in one onslaught those three kinds of conflict, hitherto separated, from which the Church has always issued victorious—the bloody conflicts of the first ages, then the internal pest of heresies,

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and finally, under the name of evangelical liberty, a vicious corruption and a perversion of discipline unknown, perhaps, in mediæval times.

### ST. CHARLES BORROMEO.

To this crowd of seducers God opposed real reformers and holy men to arrest the impetuous current and extinguish the conflagration, and to repair the harm already done. Their assiduous and manifold works for the reformation of discipline was all the more comforting to the Church by reason of the great tribulation that afflicted it, and afforded a proof of the words, "God is faithful, who . . . also with temptation will make issue" (1 Cor. x. 13). It was in these circumstances that by a Providential disposition the singular zeal and sanctity of Charles Borromeo came to bring fresh consolation to the Church.

For God so ordained that his ministry was to have a force and efficacy all its own, not only in checking the audacity of the factious, but in teaching and kindling the children of the Church. He curbed the mad ardours of the former, and refuted their futile charges with the most powerful eloquence by the example of his life and labours; he raised the hopes of the latter and revived their zeal. And it was truly wonderful how from his youth he united in himself all those qualities of the real reformer, which in others we see scattered and isolated: virtue, sense, doctrine, authority, power, quickness; and how he combined them all to serve for the defence of Catholic truth against the onrush of heresies, as is the proper mission of the Church, reviving the faith that had grown dormant and almost extinct in many, strengthening



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it by provident laws and institutions, restoring the discipline that had been dethroned, and strenuously leading back the morals of the clergy and people to the tenor of Christian life. Thus, while he accomplishes all the offices of the reformer, he also duly discharges all the functions of the "good and faithful servant," and later those of the great priest who "pleased God in his days, and was found just," and therefore worthy to be taken as an example by all classes of persons, clergy and laity, rich and poor; like those whose excellence is summarized in the encomium of Bishop and prelate, by which obeying the words of the Apostolic Peter he made himself a "pattern of the flock from the heart" (1 Pet. v. 3). No less admirable is the fact that Charles, before reaching the age of twenty-three, although raised to the highest honours and entrusted with important and most difficult affairs of the Church, made daily progress in the more perfect exercise of virtue, through that contemplation of Divine things which in sacred retirement had already renewed him, and he shone forth "a spectacle to the world, to the angels, and to men."

Then indeed, to use again the words of our predecessor Paul V., the Lord began to show forth in Charles His wonders: wisdom, justice, burning zeal in promoting the glory of God and the Catholic name, and, above all things, solicitude for that work of restoration of the faith and of the Universal Church which was treated in the august gathering of Trent. The Pontiff himself and all posterity assigned to him the merit of the celebration of this Council, inasmuch as he, before becoming the most faithful executor of it,

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was its most efficacious promoter. Indeed, were it not for his many vigils, trials, and labours, that work would not have attained its ultimate completion.

And yet all these things were but a preparation and a novitiate, in which his heart was trained with piety, his mind with study, his body with labour; while he always kept himself, modest and humble youth as he was, as clay in the hands of God and God's Vicar on earth. A life of preparation such as this was just the kind to be despised by the innovators of the time, through that same foolishness which leads the modern innovators to despise it, in their failure to observe that the wonderful works of God are brought to maturity in the shade and silence of the soul dedicated to obedience and prayer, and that in this preparation lies the germ of future progress, as the hope of the harvest lies in the sowing.

The sanctity and laboriousness of Charles, who was then preparing himself under such splendid auspices, developed in due course and produced marvellous fruit, as we have hinted already, when he, "like the good workman he was, leaving the splendour and majesty of Rome, retired to the field that he was to cultivate in Milan, and, discharging there better and better every day all his offices, brought it to such splendour, from the state of rank growths and wildness to which the evil times had so deplorably reduced it, as to make of the Church of Milan a most brilliant example of ecclesiastical discipline" (Bull "Unigenitus").

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### THE COUNCIL OF TRENT AND REFORM.

All these striking results he attained by adopting in his work of reformation the rules laid down shortly before by the Council of Trent.

For the Church, knowing well how "the imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil" (Gen. viii. 21), never ceases to combat vice and error, that "the body of sin may be destroyed to the end that we may serve sin no longer" (Rom. vi. 6). And in this conflict, as she is a mistress to herself and guided "by the grace which is diffused in our hearts by the Holy Ghost" (Eph. iv. 23), so she is governed in her thought and action by the Doctor of the Gentiles, who says: "Be ye renewed in the spirit of your mind. . . . And be not conformed to this world, but be reformed in the newness of your mind, that you may prove what is the good and the acceptable and the perfect will of God" (Rom. xii. 2). And the son of the Church and true reformer never persuades himself that he has attained the goal, but with the Apostle only protests that he is striving towards it: "Forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching myself to those that are before, I press towards the mark, to the prize of the supernal vocation of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. iii. 13, 14).

Thus it is that, united with Christ in the Church, "we in all things grow up in Him who is the Head, even Christ, from whom the whole body maketh its own increase unto the edifying of itself in charity" (Eph. iv. 15, 16), and Mother Church realizes more and more that mystery of the Divine will, "in the

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dispensation of the fulness of times to re-establish all things in Christ" (Eph. i. 9, 10).

### THE MODERNS.

No thought was given to all this by the reformers opposed by St. Charles, for they presumed to reform faith and discipline at their own caprice—nor is it better understood, Venerable Brethren, by the moderns against whom we have to combat to-day. These, too, subvert the doctrine, laws, institutions, of the Church, for ever talking about culture and civilization, not because they have this so much at heart, but because under such sounding words they are enabled the better to conceal the evil nature of their designs.

Their real aims, their plots, the line they are following, is well known to all of you, and their designs have been denounced and condemned by us. What they propose is a universal apostasy from the faith and discipline of the Church, an apostasy all the worse than the one which threatened the century of Charles, from the fact that it creeps insidious and hidden in the very veins of the Church, and with extreme subtlety pushes erroneous principles to their extreme conclusions.

But both have the same origin in the enemy who, ever alert for the perdition of men, "has oversowed cockle among the wheat" (Matt. xiii. 25); of both revolts the ways are hidden and darksome, with the same development and the same fatal issue. For as in the past the first apostasy, turning to the side on which fortune seemed to favour it, stirred up the powerful against the people or the people against the

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powerful, only to lead both classes to destruction, so this modern apostasy stimulates mutual hatred between the poor and the rich, until people, growing discontented with their lot, lead lives more and more miserable, and pay the penalty imposed on all who, absorbed in earthly and fleeting things, seek not "the kingdom of God and His justice." Nay, the present conflict has become all the more grave from the fact that, while the turbulent innovators of other times as a rule retained some fragment of the treasure of revealed doctrine, the moderns would seem to have no peace until they have utterly destroyed it. Now, once the foundations of religion are thus overturned, the bonds of civil society are also necessarily broken. Truly a spectacle full of sadness for the present and of menace for the future ; not because there is any ground for fears as to the safety of the Church, for here the Divine promises do not permit of doubt, but for the dangers that threaten the family and the nations, especially for those who foment with most activity, or who tolerate with most indifference this pestiferous wind of impiety.

Amid so impious and so stupid a war, carried on sometimes and propagated with the aid of those who should be the first to support us and help our cause ; amid this manifold transformation of error and these varied blandishments of vice, by both of which many even of our own allow themselves to be led astray, seduced as they are by the appearances of novelty and of doctrine, or by the illusion that the Church may well come to a friendly agreement with the maxims of the age, you are well aware, Venerable Brethren, that we must all oppose a vigorous resistance and repel



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the assault of the enemy with those very weapons which Charles Borromeo used in his own time.

### THE FIRST CARE OF PASTORS.

And first of all, since they are attacking the very rock of faith, either by open denial, or by hypocritical assault, or by misrepresenting revealed doctrine, we shall do well to remember what St. Charles often inculcated, viz., that "The first and chief care of pastors must be concerned with all that concerns the full and inviolate maintenance of the Catholic Faith—the faith which the Holy Roman Church professes and teaches, and without which it is impossible to please God" (Conc. Prov. I., at the beginning). And again: "In this matter no diligence can be too great to meet what are certainly the requirements of the case" (Conc. Prov. V., Pars i.). Hence it is necessary to oppose sound doctrine to the leaven of heretical depravity, which, if not repressed, corrupts the whole mass—that is, we must oppose the perverse opinions which are making their way under lying semblances, and which, taken together, are professed by Modernism, remembering with St. Charles "how supreme must be the zeal, and how diligent above all else must be the care, of the Bishop to combat the crime of heresy" (Conc. Prov. V., Pars i.).

In truth, it is not necessary to record the other words of the saint in quoting the sanctions, laws, penalties, laid down by the Roman Pontiffs against prelates who are negligent or remiss in purging their dioceses of the evil of heresy. But it will be quite opportune to meditate closely on the conclusions he draws from these: "Hence the Bishop must, above

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all things, persevere in this eternal solicitude and continuous vigilance, not only to prevent the most pestilent disease of heresy from penetrating among the flock committed to him, but even to remove the faintest suspicion of it from them. And if it should happen to penetrate—which may the Lord Christ in His pitiful mercy forbid!—then he must strive at once by all means in his power to have it driven out immediately, and he must have those who are infected or under suspicion of being infected with the pestilence treated according to the pontifical canons and sanctions" (*ibid.*).

### THE NEED OF INSTRUCTION.

But neither liberation nor preservation from the pest of error is possible except through proper instruction of the clergy and people, for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Rom. x. 17). This necessity of inculcating the truth upon all is more than ever urgent in our days, when through all the veins of the State, and from sources whence it might have been least expected, we see the poison penetrate to such a degree that all come within the scope of the reasons alleged by St. Charles in these words: "If those who live close to the heretics be not firm and well grounded in the foundations of the faith, there is only too much reason to fear that they will easily allow themselves to be drawn from them into some snare of impiety or false doctrine" (Conc. Prov. V., Pars i.). For nowadays, owing to the facility of travel, the means of communication have been increased for error as well as for all other things, and by reason of the unbridled liberty of the

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passions we live in the midst of a perverted society in which "there is no truth . . . and the knowledge of God does not exist" (Os. iv. 1); "in a land that is desolate . . . because no one thinketh in the heart" (Jer. xii. 11). Hence we, to use the words of St. Charles, "have hitherto employed much diligence to insure that the faithful of Christ all and several be well instructed in the rudiments of the Christian faith" (Con. Prov. V., Pars i.), and have written a special encyclical letter on the subject as being one of the most vital importance (Encycl. "Acerbo nimis," April 25, 1905). But although we do not wish to repeat what Charles Borromeo in his burning zeal lamented, that "We have hitherto obtained all too little success in a matter of such moment," yet, like him, "swayed by the vastness of the undertaking and of the danger," we would still further kindle the zeal of all, to the end that, taking Charles as their model, they may contribute, each in his grade and according to his strength, in this work of Christian restoration. Let fathers and employers remember with what fervour the holy Bishop constantly inculcated upon them not only to afford the opportunity but to impose the obligation of learning Christian doctrine upon their children, servants, and employés. Let clerics remember that they must help the parish priests in this teaching, and let parish priests have schools for the purpose multiplied according to the numbers and the necessities of their people, and see to it that they be commendable in the probity of the teachers, who should be assisted by men and women of tried morality after the method prescribed by the holy Archbishop of Milan (Con. Prov. V., Pars i.).

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The necessity of this Christian instruction is obviously increased both by the trend of modern times and customs, and especially by the existence of those public schools, destitute of all religion, in which everything most holy is ridiculed and condemned, and in which the lips of the teachers and the ears of the scholars are equally opened for blasphemy. We speak of those which with supreme injustice are called lay or neutral, but which in reality are the prey of the domineering tyranny of a darksome sect. This new trick of hypocritical liberty you have already denounced aloud and fearlessly, Venerable Brethren, especially in those countries where the rights of religion and of the family have been more shamelessly trampled upon, and in which the very voice of Nature, proclaiming that the faith and innocence of youth must be respected, has been stifled. To remedy, as far as was possible for us, so great an evil inflicted by those same persons who, while they claim obedience to themselves, deny it to the supreme Master of all things, we have recommended that schools of Christian doctrine be established in the various cities. And while this work, thanks to your efforts, has already made good progress, still it is earnestly to be desired that it be propagated ever more widely, and that these schools be established numerous everywhere, and be provided with teachers of sound doctrine and good life.

These same qualities are with much greater reason to be looked for in the sacred orator whose office is closely connected with that of the necessary instruction in the first elements of religious teaching. Hence the diligence and the counsel of Charles in the pro-

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vincial and diocesan synods were directed with a most special care to the formation of preachers, who might be employed with holy zeal and good fruit in "the ministry of the word." And this, too, and perhaps even more urgently, seems to be required in the times in which we live, when the faith is weakening in so many hearts, and when there is no lack of those who in a spirit of vainglory follow the fashions, adulterating the Word of God, and depriving souls of the food of life.

### A CALL TO VIGILANCE.

With the utmost vigilance, therefore, Venerable Brethren, we must see to it that our flock be not fed on wind by vain and frivolous men, but be nourished with life-giving food by "ministers of the Word" of whom it may be said: "For Christ we are ambassadors, God as it were exhorting by us. Be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. v. 20), "not walking in craftiness, nor adulterating the Word of God, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (2 Cor. iv. 2); "workmen that need not to be ashamed, and rightly handling the word of truth" (2 Tim. ii. 15). Nor less useful for us will be those most holy and most fruitful rules which the Bishop of Milan was accustomed to lay down for the faithful, and which are summarized in the words of St. Paul: "When you had received from us the word of the hearing of God, you received it not as the word of men, but (as it is indeed) the word of God, who worketh in you who have believed" (1 Thess. ii. 13).

Thus, "the Word of God, living and effectual and



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more piercing than any two-edged sword" (Heb. iv. 12), will work not only for the conservation and defence of the faith, but as an efficacious impulse to good works, for "faith without works is dead" (Jas. ii. 26); "for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified" (Rom. ii. 13).

Here, too, we see again how immense is the difference between real and false reform. For those who advocate the false, imitating the inconsistency of the foolish, are wont to rush to extremes, either by exalting faith in such a way as to exclude good works, or ascribing to Nature alone all the excellence of virtue without the aids of faith and Divine grace. Whereas the acts proceeding from merely natural uprightness are but the simulacra of virtue, neither lasting in themselves nor sufficient for salvation. The work of such reformers, therefore, is not adapted to restore discipline, but is fatal to faith and morals.

On the other hand, those who, like St. Charles, sincerely and straightforwardly seek true and salutary reform, avoid extremes, and never outstep those limits beyond which true reform cannot subsist. United as they are in the closest links with the Church and its Head, Christ, they not only derive thence strength for their interior life, but learn rules for their public action, to enable them to devote themselves with sure purpose to the work of healing human society. Now, of this Divine mission, transmitted perpetually to those who have to be the legates of Christ, it is the function "to teach all nations," and not only the things that are to be believed, but things that are to be done—that is, as Christ Himself said, "Observe

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all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. xxviii. 18-20). For He is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John xiv. 6), and He came that men "may have life and have it more abundantly" (John x. 10). But since to fulfil all those duties with the sole guidance of Nature is something far beyond what the forces of man can by themselves attain, the Church possesses, together with her magisterium, the power of governing human society, and that of sanctifying it, while she communicates the opportune and necessary means of salvation through those who, in their several grades and offices, are her ministers and co-operators.

### FAITH AND HOLINESS.

Understanding this well, the true reformers do not kill the blossom in order to save the root—that is, they do not separate faith from holiness of life—but foster both of them, and warm them with the breath of charity, which is "the bond of perfection" (Col. iii. 14). Thus, obeying the Apostle, they "keep the deposit" (1 Tim. vi. 20), not to obstruct its manifestation or dim its light for the nations, but rather to send farther and wider the most saving waters of truth and life which swell from that spring. And in this they combine theory with practice, availing themselves of the former to prevent all the wiles of error, and of the latter to apply the precepts to the morals and action of life. Therefore, too, they provide all the means, opportune or necessary, for the attainment of the end, both as regards the extirpation and "for the perfection of the saints, for the work of the ministry, the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph. iv. 12). This was the scope of the statutes, the canons, the laws, of the

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Fathers and Councils and all those means of instruction, government, sanctification, and beneficence of all kinds, and, in fine, all the discipline and activity of the Church. On such masters as these of faith and morals the true son of the Church fixes his eyes and his heart when he aims at the reformation of himself and others. And on such masters, too, Borromeo relies in his reformation of ecclesiastical discipline; he often refers to them, as when he writes: "We, following the ancient custom of the Holy Fathers and the sacred Councils, and especially of the Œcumenical Synod of Trent, have laid down many dispositions concerning these same points in our preceding Provincial Councils." So, too, in making provision for the suppression of public scandals, he declares that he is guided "both by the law and by the sanctions of the sacred canons, and, above all, those of the Council of Trent" (Conc. Prov. V., Pars i.).

And not content with this, in order the better to insure that he may never depart from this rule, he is wont to conclude the statutes of his Provincial Synods thus: "The things all and single which have been decreed and done by us in this Provincial Synod, we submit always, to be amended and corrected, to the authority and judgment of the Roman Church, of all Churches the Mother and Mistress" (Conc. Prov. VI., *sub finem*). And this purpose of his he showed forth ever more fervently as he advanced with giant strides in the perfection of the active life, not only while the Chair of Peter was occupied by the Pontiff, who was his uncle, but also under the successors of the latter, Pius V. and Gregory XIII. The election of these he powerfully aided, and he supported them strenuously

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in their great undertakings, corresponding perfectly with what they expected from him.

### REFORM AND DISCIPLINE.

But above all did he second them in putting into execution the practical means to attain the end in view, viz., the real reform of sacred discipline. Here again he showed himself as far as possible removed from the false reformers who mask their obstinate disobedience under an appearance of zeal. Beginning "the judgment of the House of God" (1 Pet. iv. 17), he applied himself first of all to reform the discipline of the clergy by constant laws, and to this end erected seminaries for the students for the priesthood, founded congregations of priests known as Oblates, called together religious families, ancient and modern, assembled Councils, and by provisions of all kinds assured and developed the work that had been undertaken. Then, without delay, he set his hand with equal vigour to reform the morals of the people, regarding as said to himself what was said to the prophet: "Lo, I have set thee . . . to root up and to pull down, and to waste and to destroy, and to build and to plant" (Jer. i. 10). Thus, like the good shepherd he was, visiting personally the churches of the province, not without fatigue, like the Divine Master he went about doing good and healing the wounds of the flock; he put forth every effort to suppress and eradicate the abuses he met on all sides, due either to ignorance or to neglect of the laws; to the perversion of ideas and the corruption of morals that abounded, he raised up barriers in the form of the schools and colleges he opened for the children and for youth, of

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the Marian societies which he developed after having seen them in their early flowering here in Rome, the hospices he threw open for the orphans, the refuges he established for girls in danger, for widows, for mendicants, for men and women rendered destitute by sickness or old age; by his protection of the poor against the tyranny of masters, against userers, against the enslaving of children; and great numbers of other institutions. But all this he effected shunning entirely the methods of those who would renew human society after their own fashion by overturning everything, by agitation, by vain noise, forgetting the Divine words: "The Lord is not found in commotion" (3 Kings xix. 11).

Just here is another point in which the real reformers differ from the false, as you, Venerable Brethren, have often experienced. The false reformers "seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ" (Phil. ii. 21); and giving ear to the insidious invitation once made to the Divine Master, "Manifest thyself to the world" (John vii. 4), they also repeat the ambitious words, "Let us also get a name," and by this temerity, which we have, alas! to deplore in our own time, "some priests fell in battle: wishing to do great things, they went out without prudence" (1 Macc. v. 57, 67).

### THE TRUE REFORMER.

The true reformer, on the contrary, "seeks not his own glory, but the glory of Him who hath sent him" (John vii. 18), and like Christ, his Exemplar, "he shall not contend nor cry, and his voice shall not be heard abroad; he shall not be turbulent or unquiet"



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(Isa. xliii. 2 *et seq.*; Matt. xii. 19), but he shall be "meek and humble of heart" (Matt. xi. 29). Hence he will please the Lord and bear most copious fruits of salvation.

In still another way are they distinguished from one another, for the false "reformer trusteth in man and maketh flesh his arm" (Jer. xvii. 5); while the true reformer puts all his trust in God, and looks to Him and to supernatural assistance for all his strength and virtue, exclaiming with the Apostle: "All things I can do in Him who strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv. 13).

These aids, which Christ has communicated in rich abundance, the faithful reformer looks for in the Church itself, to which they have been given for the salvation of all, and among them especially prayer, sacrifice, the Sacraments, which become "a fountain of water springing up to life everlasting" (John iv. 14). But all such means are repugnant to those who by crooked ways and in forgetfulness of God busy themselves with reformation, and who never cease trying to render turbid or dried up altogether those crystal springs, so that the flock of Christ may be deprived of them. And here they are even surpassed by their modern followers, who under a mask of the deepest religiousness hold in no account these means of salvation, and throw discredit on them, especially the two Sacraments by which sin is pardoned for penitent souls, and souls are strengthened with celestial food. Let all faithful pastors, therefore, endeavour with all zeal to insure that benefits of such great price be held in the highest honour, nor suffer these two works of Divine charity to languish in the affections of men.

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### ST. CHARLES'S WRITINGS.

Such was the conduct of Borromeo, among whose writings we read: "Since the fruit of the Sacraments is so great and so abundant that its value cannot easily be explained, they should be treated and received with the utmost diligence, with the deepest piety of the soul, and with external cult and veneration" (Conc. Prov. I., Pars ii.). Most worthy of note also are the recommendations with which he exhorts parish priests and preachers to revive the ancient practice of frequent Communion, as we have also done by our decree "Tridentina Synodus." "Parish priests and preachers," says the holy Bishop, "should exhort the people as often as possible to the most salutary practice of receiving the Holy Eucharist frequently, relying on the institutions and examples of the early Church, on the recommendations of the most authoritative Fathers, on the doctrine of the Roman Catechism, which treats of this matter at length, and finally on the teaching of the Council of Trent, which would have the faithful communicate in every Mass, not only by receiving the Eucharist spiritually, but also sacramentally" (Conc. Prov. III., Pars i.). He describes, too, the intention and affection with which this sacred banquet should be approached, in these words: "The people should not only be incited to receive the most holy Sacrament frequently, but should also be warned how dangerous and fatal it is to approach unworthily this sacred table of Divine food" (Conc. Prov. IV., Pars ii.). The same diligence would seem to be especially necessary in our times of vacillating faith and charity grown cold, in order that

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the increase in frequency may not be accompanied by a diminution in the reverence due to so great a mystery, but that rather it may bring with it a motive to make "a man prove himself, and so eat of that bread and drink of that chalice" (1 Cor. xi. 28).

From these founts will well up a rich spring of grace, giving vigour also to natural and human means. Nor will the action of the Christian despise the things of use and comfort for life, for these, too, come from God, the Author of grace and of Nature; but it will take the utmost care, when seeking and enjoying external things and the goods of the body, not to make of them the end and happiness of all life. Let him, therefore, who would use the means with rectitude and temperance, order them to the salvation of souls, in obedience to the words of Christ: "Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Luke xii. 31; Matt. vi. 33).

So far is this wise and ordered use of the means from being opposed to the welfare of civil society that, on the contrary, it greatly promotes the latter—and not by vain boasting, as is the fashion with factious reformers, but by facts and by supreme effort, even to the sacrifice of substance, strength, and life itself. Of this fortitude we have many examples in Bishops who, in evil days for the Church, emulating the zeal of Charles, verify the words of the Divine Master: "The good shepherd gives his life for his sheep" (John x. 11).

They are led to sacrifice themselves for the common good, influenced not by ambition for glory, or by party spirit, or by the stimulus of any private interest, but

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by that charity which never faileth. Kindled by this flame, which escapes profane eyes, Borromeo, after having exposed his life in attending the victims of the plague, did not confine himself to affording aid against present evils, but turned his solicitude to those which the future might have in store: "It is altogether reasonable that, just as an excellent father who loves his children with a single-hearted affection provides for their future as well as their present, by preparing for them what is necessary for their lives, so we, moved by the duty of paternal love, are making provision with all foresight for the faithful of our province, and are preparing for the future those aids which we have known by experience during the time of the plague to be salutary" (Conc. Prov. V., Pars ii.).

The same designs and plans of affectionate forethought, Venerable Brethren, find a practical application in that Catholic action which we have frequently recommended. To take part in this most noble apostolate, which embraces all the works of mercy that are to be rewarded with the eternal kingdom (Matt. xxv. 34 *et seq.*), the élite are called. But when they assume this burden they must be ready and fit to make a complete sacrifice of themselves and all things belonging to them for the good cause, to bear envy, contradiction, and even hatred, of many who will repay their benefits with ingratitude, to labour like "good soldiers of Christ" (2 Tim. ii. 3), to run "by patience to the fight proposed to us, looking on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith" (Heb. xii. 1, 2). A conflict, assuredly, of great difficulty, but one that is most efficacious for the well-being of civil society, even though complete victory be slow in coming.

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### ST. CHARLES AND PERSECUTION.

In this respect, too, it is given to us to admire the splendid example set by St. Charles, and to derive from it, each according to his own condition, matter for imitation and comfort. For although his singular virtue, his marvellous activity, and his abundant charity, made him worthy of so much respect, yet even he was not exempt from the law: "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. iii. 12). Thus, the very fact that he led a very austere life, that he always stood up for righteousness and honesty, that he was an incorruptible defender of law and justice, brought upon him the hostility of powerful men and the trickeries of diplomats, caused him later to be distrusted by the nobility, the clergy, and the people, and eventually drew upon him the deadly hatred of the wicked, so that his very life was sought. Yet, though of a mild and gentle disposition, he held out against all this with invincible courage.

Never did he yield in anything that would be hurtful to faith and morals, or in the face of claims contrary to discipline or burdensome on the faithful, even when these were made by a most powerful monarch who was also a Catholic. Mindful of the words of Christ, "Give unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Matt. xxii. 21), and of the declaration of the Apostles, "It is better to obey God rather than men" (Acts v. 29), he became a supreme benefactor, not only of the cause of religion, but of civil society itself, which, paying the penalty of its foolish imprudence, and almost overwhelmed by the storms of



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sedition which itself had raised, was rushing upon certain destruction.

### AN EXAMPLE FOR BISHOPS AND CATHOLICS TO-DAY.

The same praise and gratitude will be due to the Catholics of our time, and to their courageous leaders the Bishops, when they never fail in any of the duties of good citizens, either when it is a question of showing loyalty and respect to wicked rulers, when these command what is just, or of resisting their commands when they are iniquitous, holding themselves equally aloof from the froward rebellion of those who have recourse to sedition and tumult, and from the servile abjection of those who receive as sacred laws the manifestly impious statutes of perverse men who, under the lying name of liberty, subvert all things, and impose on those subject to them the harshest kind of tyranny.

This is happening in the sight of the whole world, and in the full light of modern civilization, in some nations especially, where the powers of darkness seem to have taken up their headquarters. Under this domineering tyranny all the rights of the children of the Church are being trampled upon, and the hearts of those in power have become closed to all those sentiments of generosity, courtesy, and faith, which for so long shone forth in their forefathers who gloried in the name of Christians. But it is evident that where hatred of God and of the Church exists everything goes backward precipitously towards the barbarism of ancient liberty, or, rather, towards that most cruel yoke from which only the family of Christ and the education introduced by it has freed

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us. Borromeo expressed the same thought when he said : " It is a certain and well-recognized fact that by no other crime is God more gravely offended, by none provoked to greater wrath, than by the vice of heresy, and that nothing contributes more to the ruin of provinces and kingdoms than this frightful pest" (Conc. Prov. V., Pars i.). Yet as far more deadly must be regarded the modern conspiracy to tear Christian nations from the bosom of the Church, as we have already said.

For the enemies of the Church, although in utter discord of thought and will among themselves, which is the sure mark of error, are at one only in their obstinate assaults upon truth and justice ; and as the Church is the guardian and defender of both of those, against the Church alone they close up their ranks for a united attack. And although they are wont to proclaim their impartiality and to assert that they are promoting the cause of peace, in reality, by their mild words and avowed intentions, they are only laying snares to add insult to injury, treason to violence. A new species of war is, therefore, now being waged against Christianity, and one far more dangerous than those conflicts of other times in which Borromeo won so much glory.

But taking example and instruction from him, we shall be animated to battle vigorously for those lofty interests upon which depends the salvation of the individual and of society, for faith and religion and the inviolability of public right ; we shall fight, it is true, under the spur of a bitter necessity, but at the same time cheered by the fair hope that the omnipotence of God will speed the victory for those who fight so

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glorious a battle—a hope which gathers greater strength from the powerful efficacy, persisting down to our own days, of the work done by St. Charles both in humbling pride and in strengthening the resolution to restore all things in Christ.

And now, Venerable Brethren, we may conclude in the words with which our predecessor, Paul V., already several times mentioned, concluded the letters decreeing the supreme honours to Charles: “It is right, meanwhile, that we render glory and honour and blessing to Him who lives through all ages, who blessed our fellow-servant with all spiritual benediction to make him holy and spotless in His sight. And the Lord having given him to us as a star shining in this night of sin and of our tribulation, let us have recourse to the Divine clemency, supplicating by mouth and deed that Charles, who loved the Church so ardently and helped her so greatly by his merits and example, may now assist her by his patronage, and in the day of wrath make peace for us through Christ our Lord (Bull. “Unigenitus”).

To this prayer be added for the fulfilment of all hopes the token of the Apostolic Benediction, which with warm affection we impart to you, Venerable Brethren, and to the clergy and people of each one of you.

Given at Rome at St. Peter's, May 26, 1910, in the seventh year of our pontificate.

PIUS X., POPE.

# ST. CHARLES BORRROMEO

## CHAPTER I

### *THE BRIGHTNESS OF GOD*

“And the brightness of God shone round about them.”

ON the night of October 2, 1538, the inhabitants of Arona were dazzled by the rays of a brilliant light shaped like a rainbow. This strange phenomenon flashed through the sky, passing from west to east, shining over the tower where the sentinels were on guard, and finally resting over the room of the “Rocca d’Arona” in which Margaret Borromeo lay awaiting the birth of her child; and while this celestial splendour shone over and around her, Charles Borromeo was born.

In this wonderful way it pleased Heaven to announce to the world the advent of a great reformer and a glorious saint. It looked as though God wished, from the very moment of his entrance into life, to make known that he would in future days be a burning and a shining light.

At his canonization persons said that they had

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witnessed this marvel. The Rocca d' Arona no longer exists. In 1800 Napoleon Bonaparte commanded that it should be destroyed, and at the present day one sees only ruined walls, but from the stones and débris some pious people erected a little chapel in honour of St. Charles. Antiquaries tell us that it is on the site of the room in which he was born, and which was, with charming aptness, styled "the room of the three lakes," because from each of its three windows a different view was obtained of the lovely Lago Maggiore.

Beside this little oratory towers the colossal statue in bronze of our saint, that stupendous figure that dominates the country for miles, and which one can see almost from the moment the steamer leaves the enchanting island of Isola Madre until we land at the pretty quay of Arona. From there it is but a short drive, a distance of only two and a half or three miles. It is, however, a dreadfully hot ride on a sultry day, for there is but little shade, and an Italian sun, though glorious and brilliant, is at noonday and for some hours after just a trifle too glorious and brilliant. The best time to visit the ruins of the Rocca, the statue, and the chapel, is in the early morning; for not only is it pleasanter, it is also more conducive to devotion, for one may be fortunate enough to assist at Holy Mass in the little oratory hallowed by so many pious memories. Priests travelling either for amusement or business generally make a point of spending a night

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at Arona, and offering up the Holy Sacrifice on the following morning in this blessed spot.

At the time of the birth of Charles, the Church was in a most deplorable state; never was there such pressing need of an *orthodox* reformer. Luther had started his so-called Reformation twenty-one years previously, and he and his followers, under the semblance of piety and zeal, had brought devastation into the Fold, and had led astray and ruined many. Their heresies and false doctrines had caused the very names of Reformer and Reformation to be regarded with fear and horror by all good Catholics; but now the acceptable time had arrived, the day of salvation was at hand, when a new era was to give fresh life and vigour to the True Church, and Charles Borromeo was predestined from the moment of his birth to become the champion of the Faith, the defender of the liberties of Holy Church, and the reformer of the many laxities and evils that had crept in during the sensuous, beauty-worshipping period of the Renaissance. In a word, he was, like John the Baptist, "to give knowledge of salvation to His people, unto the remission of their sins. . . . To enlighten them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death: to direct our feet into the way of peace."

Charles spent the days of his childhood at the old Rocca d' Arona with his father, Count Gilbert Borromeo, and his mother, Countess Margaret, *née* de' Medici, the sister of Cardinal John de'



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Medici, who, when our saint was twenty-two, was elected Pope, and took the name of Pius IV.

When Charles was only twelve, another uncle of his, Count Cesare Borromeo, resigned the Abbey of San Gratiano e San Felino. It was "a family living"; consequently Count Gilbert immediately conferred it and its enormous revenues on his young son. Charles had not shown any very remarkable predilection for the ecclesiastical state, but in those days laymen could be titular Abbots, and even be created Cardinals; so, although the twelve-year-old boy was now a mitred Abbot, it did not follow that he would ever be ordained. Nevertheless, from the moment of his becoming head of a great monastery, he cherished the hope of one day being, not only in name, but in fact, a priest of the Most High. From the first he showed a nobility of soul and generosity of heart quite wonderful in so young a lad. He begged his father to allow him to give his large revenues to the poor. Count Gilbert, who was a just and pious man, agreed, pleased to see his son show so much virtue. Charles was delighted, and dispensed almost all his income in the relief of the poor and afflicted.

It is a curious fact that when his father borrowed money from him—Count Gilbert was often hard up—Charles kept a strict account of the sums lent, and insisted that they should be repaid, so resolved was he that not a penny of Church property should be appropriated by his family.

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He reserved a very small sum for his own wants, only what was barely necessary to support him and supply him with books and clothes. Thus early in life he displayed that extraordinary exactitude and extreme conscientiousness that he afterwards carried almost too far, but which enabled him successfully to achieve numerous reforms.

Countess Margaret was a devoted wife and mother; she and Gilbert lived happily together for several years, and she died when Charles was ten years old, leaving six children to mourn her loss.

Count Gilbert was warmly attached to her, and for a time sincerely grieved for her; however, he soon married again, and a few years later, shortly after the death of his second wife, took unto himself a third helpmate. In the meantime Charles went to Milan to study the Humanities. There he took up his residence in the beautiful old palace of the Borromei. It is a splendid building, one of the few still remaining that show domestic Gothic architecture at its best. One of the heraldic devices of the house is carved over the portico: the camel in a basket, the crest from which they take their name—Borromeo (*buon romeo*)—signifying the good pilgrim and his great patience. Another—the Bit—is moulded beneath the windows, and their famous motto, *Humilitas*, surmounted by a crown, is frequently repeated in the fresco decoration of the walls.

In this ancient home of his race, ancient even in

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the sixteenth century, the boy Charles Borromeo "advanced in wisdom and age, and grace with God and men."

He was not a brilliant student, but he was conscientious and hard-working, and while he slowly and painfully imbibed the learning of Greece and Rome he avidly absorbed the tales of the grandeur and power of his house. Wandering through the magnificent apartments, studying the escutcheons and the frescoes that told the story of his noble ancestors' noble deeds, he became impregnated with the pride of birth that was one of the characteristics of his family. Proud though he was of his great name, he was in other respects humble and dutiful, and the charming letters he wrote to his father breathe a spirit of natural filial piety as well as intense love of God. He generally addressed them "Comiti Giberto Bourhomeo Patri Suavissimo," telling him in a very sprightly and graphic way his own sayings and doings, as well as those of his friends and tutors. From the perusal we glean many interesting details relative to his daily life, and we can picture him as a gentle, studious lad, somewhat reserved, perhaps, and too fond of solitude, but nevertheless very affectionate and docile.

## CHAPTER II

### *THE KEY OF ITALY*

IN 1554 Charles went to the University of Pavia to study civil and canon law. With his wonted energy, he immediately commenced attending lectures and classes, giving his mind with ardour to the mastering of those abstruse and difficult subjects in which he had elected to take out his degree.

He was naturally proud and reserved, he rarely associated with the bulk of his fellow-students; but he unbent with his friends, and was, when in their society, pleasant and genial. His shyness and diffidence made him shrink from notice, and few even of the professors knew what unusual talent, what a clever brain and active mind, lay hid beneath his quiet and unassuming manner; though one of his tutors, probably gifted with keen penetration, remarked to the others: "You do not sufficiently appreciate Charles Borromeo; he will one day be an ardent reformer, and will do great things for God and the Church." It was, however, only when, having passed a stiff examination with extraordinary brilliancy, and the degree of Doctor was conferred upon him, that

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friends and foes alike realized that a man of surpassing genius had for some years worked unnoticed in their midst. All had known that he was a holy and virtuous youth; indeed, his virtue and piety had, as is generally the case, caused calumniators and detractors to endeavour to tarnish the lustre of his name. They failed ignominiously, but their sneers and lies caused strangers to regard with suspicion, if not actual disfavour, the object of their hatred.

These wretches had even tried to persuade Count Gilbert Borromeo that his son, if not actually a libertine and a spendthrift, was at any rate a man of no importance—weak, stupid, and a dull clod, incapable through inertia of ever being a credit to his family.

Count Gilbert was not so easily deceived. He had his son's letters, in which the lad unconsciously laid bare his inmost soul to his "sweetest father." He had also heard the favourable reports and kindly gossip of friends and relations. Consequently he remarked: "My son, when at the University, always conducted himself as a gentleman and a good Christian, and he was ever a great comfort to me."

The fond father did not live to see the degree of Doctor of the University, with the insignia of the crown, ring, and cap, conferred upon his dearly loved boy. The good Count died some months previously, in August, 1558.

On his death, Charles, though the second son,

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## The Key of Italy

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was called upon to fulfil the duties of head of the family, the heir, Count Frederick, throwing upon him all the trouble of arranging matters and winding up affairs.

Everything was at sixes and at sevens. Not only was Count Gilbert's property in apparently inextricable confusion ; but to add to the young student's annoyance, when he returned to Arona he discovered that Philip II., King of Spain, who at that period governed the duchy of Milan, had placed a Spanish Captain in command of the garrison at the Rocca d' Arona, under the pretext that Count Frederick was too young to hold so important yet vulnerable a fortress, remarking that Arona was the key of Italy, and, if taken by the French, endless strife and disorder would ensue.

Whether the once powerful, but then dismembered and impotent, duchy was better off as a fief of Spain than under the rule of France was a vexed question. Some preferred the Hapsburgs ; for when Louis XII. and his Viceroys held sway in the beautiful city of Milan, they had disgusted and alienated the people by their brutality. They had acted like the barbarian invaders of old, and had pillaged and destroyed magnificent buildings, stately castles, priceless art treasures. The Milanese hated them, and rejoiced when they were driven forth, and a Sforza once more governed the duchy.

However, the reign of Massimiliano Sforza and that of his brother and successor, Francesco II., were of short duration, for the latter died in 1535,



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leaving no child to inherit the ducal throne. Milan once more devolved as a vacant fief to the Empire, and had since remained under continued subjection to the House of Hapsburg. Count Gilbert had always been a faithful adherent of that house, and it grieved his sons that they should apparently not be trusted by Philip; for they considered his pretext a mere ruse, and that what he really wished was to hold absolute sway in the stronghold that had been theirs for many centuries.

While Charles endeavoured to regain the complete control of the Rocca for his brother, he little dreamed that one day he himself would be in all but name the real ruler of the duchy, his powerful influence and his indomitable will compelling the Court of Spain to yield him supremacy.

At this early age the masterful and somewhat imperious temper of the young student triumphed. After lengthy negotiations and many *pourparlers*, he succeeded in persuading Philip and his Minister Ruy Gomez to dismiss the Spanish Captain, and instal Count Frederick as Commander of the Rocca. Charles gave his elder brother many wise and prudent counsels, exhorting him to be always on the alert, to stay constantly in the fortress, seldom to leave it, and only for a very short time, remarking: "In case any distinguished personages arrive unexpectedly, they will see for themselves that you personally control the garrison, and keep strict watch and ward over the country."

Thus the key of Italy remained in the hands of the Borromei.

## CHAPTER III

### *ELECTION OF PIUS IV.—“VATICAN NIGHTS”*

PAUL IV. died in the autumn of 1559, and on the following Christmas Day Cardinal de' Medici, the uncle of Charles, was unanimously elected Pope. He took the name of Pius IV., and was solemnly consecrated on January 6, 1560.

Needless to say, the news of his election to the Throne of the Fisherman was joyously received by his relatives. Count Frederick Borromeo at once hastened to Rome, and Charles also set out as soon as possible *en route* for the Eternal City. He travelled rapidly, often taking six posts in a day; but, notwithstanding all his speed, he did not arrive in time to be present at the august and sacred ceremony.

He wrote a characteristic letter from Lodi to his cousin Guido Borromeo, which shows not only the intensity of the love and pride he cherished for his ancient name and the honour of his family, but also his natural aptitude for detail, and the methodical bent of his mind.

“I write to you in order that you may get a scroll painted without delay with the Arms of the Borromei—that is, with the Camel, the Bit, the Unicorn, and

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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Humilitas, which compose the escutcheon of the Borromei, and the 'bussole'<sup>1</sup> of the Vitaliens.<sup>2</sup> You will have it correctly reproduced and properly coloured. If it is not ready to give to John Peter when he sets out, be sure to forward it by a trusty messenger as soon after as possible. I beg of you not to delay, but to arrange that I may get it in Rome immediately on arrival. See that the escutcheon is well painted, and on no account omit getting it quickly done, and sent on to me without delay. Tell Signora Camilla to get the Nuns to make two or four very fine rochets, and to hurry up about it.

*"Written at Lodi, January 3, 1560."*

We dwell particularly on the pride and pleasure that at this period of his life the young Count took in his ancient lineage, in order to accentuate the deep humility that was so marked a trait in his character in after-years. It would certainly have seemed incredible to him then, if a prophet had foretold that in a few short years he, the scion of an illustrious house, the haughty noble, would for the love of Christ divest himself of all things, and renounce his benefices, "which having he was great, and casting away, greater." He not only did this, but he ruthlessly turned out from

<sup>1</sup> We fancy that this peculiar word means the three lambs which form part of the shield of his house.

<sup>2</sup> The Borromei claim to be descended from Vitalien of Padua, who was baptized by a disciple of St. Peter, St. Prosdocime, Bishop of that town.

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## Election of Pius IV.—“Vatican Nights”

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the Duomo at Milan the biers of the Dukes of that city. They had hitherto been suspended in the apse between columns, but the saintly ascetic would have none of them; he reformed away all those superb dead Visconti and Sforza, and he also banished the noisy life of the city that had found its way, like the Jews of Jerusalem of old, into the house of God, making a mart for worldly affairs, buying, selling and trafficking even in the sacred precincts. Thus the austere reformer banished all that was not pure and sacred from the cathedral.

At the time of which we write Charles had not shown signs of the wonderful sanctity, extreme austerity, and devout zeal for God's glory, that afterwards distinguished him in so marked a degree. He was, it is true, a good and practical Catholic, but he was also a haughty noble, proud of his ancient name, and intensely pleased, not only at the new lustre the election of his uncle to the See of St. Peter would confer upon his family, but also quite alive to the material advantages he and his brother were likely to enjoy as nephews of the new Pontiff.

When Pius IV. created him Cardinal-Deacon, Grand Penitentiary, Secretary of State, and Administrator of the See of Milan, he gladly accepted these dignities. Soon afterwards he was nominated Legate of Bologna, Romagno, and Ancona, Protector of Portugal, part of Germany, and of the Catholic cantons of Switzerland.

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The Orders of Carmel and of the Umiliati, of the Canons Regular of the Holy Cross of Coimbra, the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, of Malta, and of the Holy Cross of Christ, were also placed under his protection, and at that period the dignity of Protector of a religious Order entailed grave responsibilities.

Decidedly Count Charles was overwhelmed with honour and wealth, and the wonder is, not that their splendour dazzled his eyes, but that he did not sink hopelessly beneath their weight, and become an arrogant, self-sufficient priest or clergyman.

Yet, though he apparently led a life of ostentation and luxury, surrounded by a princely train of retainers and dependents, sumptuously installed in a magnificent palace, in the midst of all this pride of life, this pomp and circumstance of high position, Charles never forgot, but always practised, the duties of a devout Christian. Every day he spent a considerable time in prayer and meditation, he assisted at Holy Mass, and frequently received the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist.

The desire to enter the sacred ministry grew upon him. When quite a young lad he had received the tonsure, and later on Minor Orders, and it was understood in the family that he would probably one day be ordained. In the solitude of his own apartment he lifted his soul to God, praying the Holy Ghost to enlighten and direct

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## Election of Pius IV.—“Vatican Nights”

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him, begging for guidance in the splendid, thorny path it was his destiny to tread, and imploring that the grace of the Sacrament of Holy Orders might be given him, and that the Almighty might deem him worthy to serve Him as a Minister of His Gospel. Nor did he omit, in the midst of all the pomp of place and power, to practise constant mortification, and even severe corporal penances.

Yet to a certain extent he revelled in this outward show, and he certainly took advantage of his exalted position to arrange advantageous marriages for his brother and sisters.

Count Frederick espoused in 1560 Virginia de la Rovere, the daughter of the Duke of Urbino, in every respect a most desirable match; and about the same time his sister, Camilla, married Cesare Gonzaga, Prince of Mantua. From her childhood Anna Borromeo had been affianced to Fabrizio, the son of the celebrated Constable Marcantonio Colonna, Viceroy of Sicily, and of his wife Felice Orsini.<sup>1</sup> She was the favourite sister of Charles; consequently this alliance, uniting her with a scion of the two noblest and most distinguished of the old Roman families, gave him great pleasure. Their eldest sister, Isabella, was a nun in the Convent of the Blessed Virgin at Milan, and was called Sister Corona.

<sup>1</sup> The bride's dowry was 40,000 golden crowns, with interest at seven per cent. The marriage contract is preserved in the archives of the Colonnas.



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## St. Charles Borromeo

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Another sister, Geronima, was at a convent school, but left in 1561, and on February 15 of that year the Secretary of State wrote :

“I wish you to do your utmost to train our sister Geronima in the usages of polite society, and to break her of the manners she has contracted in the convent.”

We must not, however, jump to the conclusion that Charles did not approve of conventual education for young maidens ; on the contrary, he was of opinion that only behind the sheltering walls of a convent could a girl acquire solid Christian virtue. But, when she was older, he knew that it was necessary for her, under the tuition of a *grande dame*, to gain that grace and *savoir-faire* that, united to the modesty and piety taught her in the cloister, would make her an attractive, charming, as well as devout woman. He intended that Geronima should marry, so it was decidedly desirable that she should possess the accomplishments and manners suited to the high position she would doubtless soon fill ; but when she left school, he confided his youngest sister Hortense to the care of the same good nuns.

While occupied in negotiating suitable alliances for his family, and in attending with unwearying energy and precision to the affairs of his high offices, never neglecting any of the numberless occupations that filled his days, he found time to start those world-renowned literary and scientific entertainments known as the “Vatican Nights.”

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## Election of Pius IV.—“Vatican Nights”

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These were held in one of the rooms of the Monastery of St. Martha at the Vatican; and these feasts of reason and flow of soul were frequented by the most erudite and distinguished men of the day. The Simonetti, Boncampagni, Gonzagas, Visconti, and Alciati, all gathered round the young Secretary of State, forming an academy of which he was President. He was the guiding star, the leader in these conferences; and though at first an impediment prevented him from speaking fluently, he soon overcame it, and his brilliant and pregnant discourses were listened to with bated breath and keenest interest by all these great and learned men.

Each member selected a pseudonym, and probably because it was the direct opposite of his orderly and well-balanced mind, and would therefore more thoroughly conceal his identity from outsiders, Charles took the name of Chaos.

At first the Academicians only discussed the doctrines of pagan philosophy. The rhetoric of Aristotle and the stoicism of Epictetus were most frequently the subjects selected. Charles generally dived into a manual of Epictetus that he carried about with him, making the maxims of the heroic Stoic the subject of his dissertations. The stern probity and strict morality of this pagan philosopher appealed to his proud and inflexible character.

Soon, however, a change came over the spirit of these reunions, and the learning of Greece and

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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Rome gave way to moving discourses on sacred subjects. The ancient philosophers and their maxims faded away before the splendid heroism and sublime doctrines of the Christian saints. Needless to say that above and before all they selected passages from the New Testament as their theme.

On one occasion Charles spoke with such inspired eloquence on the fourth beatitude, "*Beati qui esuriunt et sitiunt justitiam*" (Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill), that his audience were carried completely away by his burning eloquence, and were moved almost to tears by his tender pathos.

These conferences were, except when he played on the violoncello or the lute—for he was passionately fond of music—the only recreations Charles indulged in. These meetings he turned to good account in more ways than one, for not only did they afford a pleasant and intellectual distraction, but they also enabled him attentively to study the Academicians, and he was thus able to select and recommend to Pius IV. the men he considered best fitted to fill episcopal sees and receive the Cardinal's hat.

Some of them afterwards worthily occupied exalted positions. Ugo Boncompagni became Sovereign Pontiff under the name of Gregory XIII., and Simonetti was Papal Legate at the Council of Trent, while others also worthily filled episcopal thrones.

## CHAPTER IV

### *DEATH OF COUNT FREDERICK*

ON November 19, 1562, Count Frederick Borromeo died suddenly of a malignant fever. Charles was almost broken-hearted, for he and his brother had always been the best of friends and comrades. He, notwithstanding his grief, wrote as follows, in his usual concise manner, to his brother-in-law, Prince Cesare Gonzaga :

“ So great was the virulence of the fever that lately attacked my brother, he was but a few days ill, dying in an incredibly short time. He passed peacefully away at two o'clock this morning. God grant that he is now in possession of the Beatific Vision.”

Frederick died childless, so Charles was now the sole remaining heir ; consequently all the family, even the Sovereign Pontiff, wished him to marry. But the young Cardinal-Deacon had long intended to become a priest, and this calamity made him resolve to delay no longer. He had dallied too long ; he had allowed press of business, State affairs, and his multifarious duties, to come between him and his sublime vocation. His brother's

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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sudden death convinced him of the vanity and instability of earthly grandeur and happiness.

“Vanity of vanities . . . all is vanity. All is vanity and vexation of spirit. What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world, if he lose his own soul?”

These words of profound wisdom and of undeniable truth, that changed the gallant knight, Ignatius of Loyola, into an heroic saint, impressed themselves so deeply on the mind and heart of the splendour-loving, haughty Secretary of State that he became an altered man.

It was the turning-point in his career. Up to the moment of his brother's sudden and painful death he had, as we have seen, been a proud, ambitious young noble—high-minded, it is true, pure-souled, virtuous, and conscientious, but the loftiness of his character, the singleness of his aims, were marred by a too great pride of birth and a too keen appreciation of worldly honours. All was changed from the moment that he resolutely put his hand to the plough; he never turned or glanced back, but advanced with giant strides in the difficult path of Christian perfection.

He wrote as follows to his cousin, Isabella Borromeo Trivulzi, on December 15, 1569:

“I acknowledge that my brother's death has been of great spiritual profit to me. It has made me realize how great and all-pervading is human misery, and how happy and glorious is life everlasting.”

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## Death of Count Frederick

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With his usual promptitude, he got Cardinal Frederick Cesar to ordain him priest in the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore.

Even the Sovereign Pontiff was not in his confidence ; it was only when it was an accomplished fact that he told Pius IV. that he had received the Sacrament of Holy Orders.

The Pope was rather annoyed ; he had hoped that Charles would yield to his wishes and take unto himself a wife ; consequently he expressed displeasure and disappointment. There would now be no heir to inherit the broad lands and great possessions of the Borromei. On the death of Charles they would pass out of the direct line. Why had he irrevocably bound himself to celibacy ?

Charles listened to this discourse with humility and deference ; but when the Pope had exhausted his complaints, he said, with a winning smile : " Do not be angry with me, Holy Father, for at last I am wedded to the Spouse I have long and ardently desired."

The Pope made the best of it. Probably in his heart of hearts he was pleased that his nephew had chosen the better part, though for family reasons he had urged him to adopt a different course.

Charles was almost immediately created Cardinal-Priest, and took the title-church of Santa Prassede.



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## St. Charles Borromeo

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On September 14, 1563, he wrote the following letter to his sister, Sister Corona :

"I celebrated my first Mass on the feast of the glorious Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary at St. Peter's, on the Altar of the Confession, under which are buried the Holy Apostles SS. Peter and Paul. It is a blessed and venerable spot, and as I celebrated I felt inexpressible joy and consolation. . . . God grant that all I do may be for the salvation of my soul and the Divine service."

There is still a little of the old leaven in Charles, for we note that he puts his own soul's salvation first, and the Divine service last. Perhaps it was only a slip of the pen, but he was so methodical and exact that he was unlikely to dash off a letter even to his sister in haste. We picture him as for the first time he offered up the Holy Sacrifice, young, ardent, engrossed, his whole soul given up to the contemplation of the Divine mysteries. We feel sure that no distractions blurred his mind, that his thoughts were clear and well defined like his features.

His face as it was in later life is familiar to all of us, clean-shaven, with a remarkably large aquiline nose, straight brows, deep-set bright blue eyes, short upper lip, large mouth, and firm chin. His is the face of an enthusiast, an ascetic worn and wasted, the eyes glowing with unquenchable fire, with unconquerable resolution. But when he celebrated his first Holy Mass his countenance

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## Death of Count Frederick

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had the freshness and roundness of youth, he wore a short chestnut beard, and his eyes could still sparkle with joyous life.

The Confession or Shrine of SS. Peter and Paul opens from the centre of the circular passage in the crypt at St. Peter's. Only half the bodies of the saints are preserved there; the other portion of St. Peter is at the Lateran, and of St. Paul at S. Paolo fuori le Mura.

Yet the spot where St. Charles celebrated his first Mass is one of the most sacred in the world, and is unutterably dear to all Catholics, for, as St. Ambrose says:

"Where Peter is, there is the Church; and where the Church is, there is no death, but life eternal;" and St. John Chrysostom writes in his "Homily on the Epistle to the Romans": "From this place Peter, from this place Paul, shall be caught up in the resurrection. Oh, consider with trembling that which Rome will behold when Paul suddenly rises with Peter from this sepulchre, and is carried up into the air to meet the Lord!"

No wonder that in that twice-hallowed place the soul of Charles Borromeo was filled with Divine love and holy fervour.

To some of us the altar on which he offered up his second Mass is even more devotional, certainly more interesting. Great and glorious saints the Prince of the Apostles and the Apostle of the Gentiles undeniably are, revered and honoured as they must always be above all others; yet the

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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altar in the little chapel of the Convent of the Gesù, on which Ignatius of Loyola constantly celebrated, appeals more strongly to us.

The saintly founder of the Society of Jesus lived in a time much nearer to our own than the Holy Apostles; consequently it is much easier for us in this twentieth century to realize his striking and attractive personality. Our thoughts and hearts are drawn irresistibly towards him, and we fancy we know what Charles must have felt when, only six years after the death of St. Ignatius, he officiated at the altar hallowed by sacred memories of the soldier-saint.

Of course St. Ignatius was not yet canonized, but all Rome, indeed all Christendom, revered and loved him. He was called ~~the~~; the fame of his wonderful sanctity had spread far and near. His sons were already preaching the Gospel of Christ in distant lands, converting the heathen, bringing faith and love and hope, not only into countries sunk in the darkness of paganism, but into the fair lands that had once been Catholic, but had unfortunately lost the true Faith, and had become a prey to the ravages of heresy.

Charles, who was soon to be the dauntless champion of Catholicism, the inflexible defender of the rights of Holy Church, chose for his director a holy and learned priest of the Society that has more than any other helped to suppress heresy by converting heretics, and has pledged itself in all things and in all ways to yield implicit obedience to Christ's Vicar on earth.

## CHAPTER VI

### *THE CHURCH OF PEACE—THE APOSTLE OF ROME*

THE Council of Trent thus brought to a successful and glorious termination, the Sovereign Pontiff, the Princes and pastors of the Church, devoted themselves to the task of carrying out its decrees.

Foremost and most zealous in this strenuous work was Charles Borromeo. He ably co-operated with the erudite prelates and distinguished literary men whom Pius had selected to compose the Catechism of Trent, a work which is, as we all know, a complete and perfect abridgment of Catholic theology. It was not, however, published during the lifetime of Pius IV., though it was in the press. On the accession of St. Pius V., he got it carefully revised by another Commission, having Cardinal Serletti as President, and Poggiani as Secretary.

In the month of September, 1566, two editions appeared, one in Latin, and the other in Italian.

Charles also helped considerably in the revision of the Breviary and the Missal. His time was fully taken up with these difficult tasks, but, like most persons who have plenty to do, he generally

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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found time to do more. It is only the indolent and the frivolous who, while frittering away the precious hours, never have a spare moment.

In 1564 Charles started restoring and finished rebuilding his church of St. Prassede. During the absence of the Popes at Avignon it had become almost a ruin. Nicolas V. had commenced its restoration, and now in an incredibly short time Charles finished this work. Some people say he spoiled the general effect by introducing injudicious modernizations that do not harmonize with the low campanile, the porch, and the terra-cotta mosaics and cornices, the parts that still remain of the old church erected by Paschal I. in the ninth century. It is a matter of taste. It is, however, certain that Charles got the work executed in the way that he considered best. At any rate it is a church full of historical interest, if not of perfect architecture, for St. Prassede was the daughter of Pudens, in whose house St. Paul lodged, and sister of St. Pudentiana, and they were among his first converts. An oratory was erected on the site where the sisters were buried by Pius I. in 499, but at the present day their bodies are interred under the high-altar.

The greatest treasure of the church is not, however, the bodies of these holy women, but the column to which Jesus Christ was bound and scourged. Every year thousands of devout pilgrims visit this sacred relic. It was brought to Rome in 1223 by Cardinal Giovanni Colonna, having been

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given to him by the Saracens, because when Cardinal of St. Prassede and Legate of the Crusade he had been taken prisoner by them and condemned to death, and he was rescued by a miraculous intervention of heavenly light.

Notwithstanding its architectural defects, it is a peaceful and devotional church. "St. Praxed's ever was the church for peace."

After and during its restoration the young Cardinal frequently came to pray in the restful little chapel in the left aisle, or to meditate in the cloisters, where the orange-tree he planted still flourishes and bears golden fruit. The little chapel is now called by his name, and in it are preserved his episcopal throne—it is only an ordinary wooden chair—and the table at which he used to wait upon and feed twelve poor men every day. For Charles loved the poor with a consuming passion, helped them in every way, becoming like unto a servant that he might the better and more efficaciously tend and nourish them. He gave them not only money, food, and clothes, but himself—his time, his heart, his whole generous soul, believing that

"The Holy Supper is kept indeed  
In whatso we share with another's need ;  
Not what we give, but what we share,  
For the gift without the giver is bare.  
Who gives himself with his alms feeds three,  
Himself, his hungering neighbour, and Me."

While in Rome he spent nearly every penny he possessed in charity, only reserving a sufficient



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amount to pay his attendants, buy the necessities of life, and keep his house in order. He had forsworn splendour, he no longer fared sumptuously or went in silk attire; on the contrary, a crust of bread, taken with dried figs and raisins or a few nuts, was his only food, water his only drink, and he wore raiment of the cheapest and simplest material consistent with the dignity of a Prince of the Church. He dismissed most of his staff, keeping the smallest possible number of priests and domestics. At this time he was fortunately able to turn another of his passions to the Divine service—his love of music. The Council of Trent had called the attention of the Pope and the Bishops to the fact that worldly and unseemly chants were used in the churches. They could, indeed, scarcely be dignified with that name, for they were as often as not gay, rollicking airs, trolled forth with such verve that it was impossible to pray, or to attend with fitting reverence and devotion to the Holy Sacrifice; for these varied, loud and persistent melodies quite drowned the voice of the celebrant. It was resolved that the Gregorian chant, or something closely resembling it, should be used; consequently a Commission was appointed by Pius IV. to undertake the reform of Church music.

Who better fitted to direct this assembly than the Cardinal, who played with such artistic skill and melodious sweetness both on the lute and the violoncello, whose expert fingers brought forth

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## The Church of Peace

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from these instruments strains of such surpassing melody that they were often able to soothe and refresh the overworked aged Pope in moments of weariness and pain?

Charles employed the celebrated musician Pier Luigi (he was generally called by the name of his native town, Palestrina) to compose three Masses; the most beautiful of these *chefs-d'œuvre* was called the "Mass of Pope Marcellus," and is well-known throughout Christendom. When Pius IV. heard it for the first time, he exclaimed, "These sublime melodies must be those heavenly canticles that the Apostle St. John heard in the New Jerusalem"; and he applied to it, with a slight alteration, Dante's verses, "They render voice to voice in modulation and sweetness that cannot be comprehended excepting there where joy is made eternal."

Palestrina became the friend of Charles Borromeo, as he was already of Philip Neri, the gentle and seraphic saint who loved and appreciated sweet melodies so dearly that he wrote in his rule "that his sons and the Faithful should rouse themselves to the contemplation of heavenly things by means of musical harmony."

Palestrina was in 1565 appointed composer to the Papal chapel, and universally recognized as the reformer of sacred music.

The friendship that in consequence sprang up between these three passionate lovers of beautiful music—the noble Cardinal, the humble priest, and the world-renowned musician—was one of rare

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strength and depth. They were all three different in character, in position, in appearance, and yet all three were drawn closely together, first by a great mutual love of music, and afterwards, when they knew each other better, by the knowledge that all three loved their Saviour with unquenchable ardour. Of course, Palestrina was not a saint like Philip and Charles, but he was a good practical Catholic, who devoted his incomparable genius to the Divine service.

St. Philip Neri was at this time about fifty years old, and Charles was twenty-five; the difference in age of a quarter of a century only helped to strengthen the bonds of their friendship. Charles felt for the saintly Apostle of Rome sincere veneration mingled with warm affection, treating St. Philip with the deference and humility of a disciple; and the gentle "Apostle" on his side showed considerable admiration and esteem for the Secretary of State's powerful intellect, sound common-sense, strict integrity, and generous devotion to the poor and suffering. Philip was a man of such surpassing sanctity that to know him was not only a liberal, but a holy education. He had a gentle, kindly disposition, a fatherly and benevolent way with him that fascinated most people as absolutely as his winning smile and his soft, low voice. Charles, as we have seen, was reserved, austere, somewhat rigid and unbending. He did not talk much, being of a silent, self-contained nature; he hardly ever laughed aloud, but his rare smile was

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## The Church of Peace

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like a flash of summer, it was so spontaneous and genial. Philip, on the contrary, not only smiled frequently, but laughed heartily, thoroughly enjoying a joke or a *bon mot*. Indeed, he himself often indulged in harmless pleasantries, and could relate an amusing anecdote in a joyous and humorous manner. Notwithstanding these differences in outward seeming, they were interiorly so alike that these little disparities only drew them closer together, as opposite natures generally revere and admire each other, venerating and appreciating the gifts they do not themselves possess.

Charles and Philip were, however, alike in essentials; they both possessed angelic purity of soul, noble, intellectual, and liberal minds, and loyal, courageous, generous hearts. Both were inflamed by the same seraphic love of God, burning zeal for souls, and an unbounded devotion to the poor and afflicted members of Christ's flock. So great was the esteem and veneration in which the Cardinal held the humble priest of the Oratory, that, when leaving Rome to take possession of his See of Milan, he confided to Philip's spiritual guidance his beloved sister, Princess Anna Colonna.

From that period until her death in 1582, Anna was Philip's penitent, and under his direction attained to great and rare perfection. In the midst of the luxury and splendour of the Colonna palace, she led a life of a humble and fervent

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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Christian. She had no children, and this was a terrible trial to her. She often confided her sorrow to Philip, and one day he said: "Do not grieve, Anna; your trouble will not last long, for you will have two sons."

Afterwards she said that she owed her boys to the intercession of St. Philip, and that they were the children of prayer. Her connection with the Apostle of Rome drew closer together the ties of friendship that bound him and her brother, the Archbishop of Milan; and after Charles had gone to his See he frequently wrote long and interesting letters to Philip, who replied in his usual pleasant manner, and, though absent in body, they remained affectionately united in spirit, and their mutual love and esteem constantly increased and deepened.

In a letter to Anna, Charles writes in 1571:

"I look upon it as a precious blessing that you find such great consolation and support in your frequent conversations with Father Philip, and in his direction of your soul. Wherefore I beg of you to persevere in this way of life, and to strengthen within you these beginnings of the spiritual life by reading the pious books and performing the pious exercises Father Philip recommends. I am certain that you will thus advance rapidly towards perfection, and that your soul will be in such peace that you will always rejoice and be glad in our Lord."

In 1572 he again wrote: "I received your letter and the blessed medal Father Philip gave

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## The Church of Peace

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you for me. It is very dear to me for his sake as well as for yours. Thank him for this second spiritual treasure given to me, and be sure you let me know what indulgences are attached to the medal. I am delighted to hear that Signor Marcantonio frequently attends the sermons and spiritual exercises at St. Geronimo. I am confident that his piety will cause him to reap great benefit, and even pleasure, from them, and that his example will lead others to frequent these devotions."

Thus this holy friendship ripened and these chosen souls were drawn closer together, through their fervent love of their Redeemer.

At last Charles was about to realize his heart's desire, and take formal possession of his See of Milan ; for it was only after long and weary waiting that his uncle, the Sovereign Pontiff, consented to part with this nephew who was the prop and the comfort of his declining years.



## CHAPTER VII

### *THE CITY OF THE PLAINS*

ALTHOUGH several months had passed since Charles Borromeo had been nominated Archbishop of Milan, it was not until December 7, 1563, the feast of St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, that he was consecrated.

The officiating prelate was Cardinal John Anthony Serbellone, assisted by the Archbishop Tholomée Sepontino and Felix Tyranno.

On March 23 of the following year Cardinal Alexander Farnese conferred on him the pallium with all the usual magnificent ceremonies.

Charles ardently desired to take formal possession of his See, but the Pope would not allow him to leave Rome. Unable to go in person, he sent his Vicar, Anthony Roberti, to represent him. This good priest was welcomed with open arms by the Milanese. It was eighty years since they had had a resident Archbishop, and many of them had not only never received, but had never witnessed the conferring of, the Sacrament of Confirmation, a strange and deplorable fact, particularly in a city so famed in former times for the sanctity of

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## The City of the Plains

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both pastors and people. It might in the early ages of Christianity have been called the City of Saints, for it counted thirty-six canonized saints among its prelates; among these were St. Barnabas, who was the first Bishop, and St. Ambrose, who before the coming of Charles was the greatest.

On June 24, 1563, Charles had sent Father Palmio, S.J., and Father Carvagial, S.J., to prepare Milan to adopt the reforms decreed by the Council of Trent. They opened schools for the education of children, and did what they could to effect reforms; but it was absolutely impossible to bring their labours to a successful termination while the Archbishop was absent. Consequently, Charles implored Pius IV. to allow him to set out for his See and to assemble the Suffragan Bishops—they were seventeen in number—at a Provincial Council. Accordingly, in September, 1563, Charles was at last permitted to leave Rome. He travelled through Florence and Bologna, and was deeply grieved at the sad state of affairs in Tuscany. He wrote to the Pope:

“The Grand-Duke of Florence greatly praises the Bishops of Fiesole and Sienna, but the Archbishop of Florence has not yet taken possession of his See. Cosmo regrets this deeply; he tells me that Florence has not had a resident prelate for forty years, her religious requirements are great, the people are in a state of deplorable ignorance. A complete spiritual reformation is necessary,

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and the Duke implores your Holiness to send him an Archbishop. No matter who he is, so long as he comes at once, he will be heartily welcomed."

Charles next stopped at Bologna, where he was consoled and rejoiced to find religion in a flourishing condition, the citizens leading good and holy lives, and they and the clergy alike eager to submit in all things to the decrees of the Council of Trent. Finally Charles entered Milan. He was greeted with enthusiasm; all the city was *en fête*; rich draperies covered the walls of the houses, triumphal arches spanned the streets. Not even in the olden days, when splendour-loving Visconti and Sforza led their brides through gorgeously decorated streets in the midst of a loyal and enthusiastic people, were the pageants more splendid, the warm welcome more sincere. Seldom, if ever, had the rich City of the Plains given a more heartfelt and magnificent reception to even the most distinguished of her sons than to the Cardinal-Archbishop, riding slowly in on a white horse, attired in the robes of a Prince of the Church, and wearing the mitre and cope.

He lost no time in convoking the Provincial Council. On the seventh day after his arrival the Bishops walked in procession to the Duomo; an immense crowd filled its vast aisles; the Cardinal opened the proceedings by singing the High Mass and preaching.

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## The City of the Plains

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The text he selected was : " With desire have I desired to eat this Pasch with you."

Charles had quite overcome the impediment that had prevented his speaking fluently and distinctly. He now spoke, not only with burning fervour, but with eloquence and grace. His hearers listened entranced, as his glowing words waked them from the spiritual lethargy into which they had fallen ; for he called on them in ringing tones to lead good and holy lives, to give up sin, and perform penance for their past faults. He implored the clergy to devote themselves heart and soul to the duties of their sacred calling, and to unite their prayers with his for the salvation of souls.

This first Council was a model for all the succeeding ones ; it lasted through many sessions. It drew up minute regulations for the Bishops and clergy, and did much to aid towards the carrying out of the decrees of Trent. Charles sent an accurate account of its doings to the Sovereign Pontiff, who cordially approved of and confirmed its regulations.

Charles, as Papal Legate, had to go to Trent to meet the Archduchesses of Austria, the sisters of the Emperor Maximilian, and to escort to Florence the Princess who was about to wed the Duke of Tuscany.

This duty he found decidedly irksome, but he was engaged in performing it, with his usual thoroughness, and had just reached Firenzuola

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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when the news reached him of the serious illness of his uncle, Pius IV.

At first he was undecided whether he should hasten at once to Rome, or wait to finish his mission. However, he heard such bad accounts of the Pope's health, and of the small chance there was of his recovery, that he asked permission of the Duke of Tuscany to leave.

This request the Prince at once granted, and Charles immediately set out for Rome.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *A NEST OF SAINTS*

PIUS IV. lay on his deathbed. Beside him knelt his nephew, Charles Borromeo, Cardinal-Archbishop of Milan, his friend Father Philip Neri, founder of the Oratory, and the two holy Cardinals Sirletto and Paleotto.

These four devoted friends remained with the dying man until he breathed his last, praying and tending him. Charles broke the news to him that his hours were numbered, saying earnestly :

“I implore your Holiness to think no more of the affairs of this world, nor even be any longer solicitous about the welfare of the Church ; give your whole heart and soul to preparing for eternity. I ask you to add this favour to the many you have already conferred upon me.”

When he heard the dear voice, speaking to him in accents of sincere affection, the venerable Pontiff roused himself from the lethargy into which he was falling. Charles held a crucifix to his lips ; he devoutly kissed it ; then, with a sweet smile, he thanked his nephew and again kissed the image of our Redeemer. Charles administered



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## St. Charles Borromeo

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to him Extreme Unction and the Holy Viaticum, and continued in prayer by his bedside, never leaving him even for a moment. The Pope retained consciousness to the end, and passed quietly away, pronouncing in a clear voice holy Simeon's words: "Nunc dimittis servum tuum, Domine, secundum verbum tuum in pace."

He expired on December 10, 1565, in the sixty-sixth year of his age and the seventh of his pontificate. He was one of the most distinguished of the successors of St. Peter, for it was he who brought to a successful termination the greatest of the Councils. He did much to heal dissension among Christian Kings and Princes, and cause peace and concord to reign, not only in the Church, but in the world. He ably and generously helped with men and money the Knights of Jerusalem in their struggle against the Turks, and he induced the King of Spain also to send to their assistance troops and money. What he did for the Eternal City is graphically and concisely expressed in the following epigram:

*"Marmoream me fecit, eram cum terrea, Cæsar,  
Aurea sub quarto sum modo facta Pio."*

It is much the same in the case of Popes as of Kings: "Le Roi est mort! Vive le Roi!" Only a longer time has necessarily to elapse between the burial of the dead potentate and the election of his successor.

The Cardinals must meet in conclave; they

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## A Nest of Saints

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must by fervent prayer, long watching, and rigorous fasting, implore the guidance of the Holy Ghost.

On January 7, 1566, Cardinal Alessandrino was unanimously elected. He had been the devoted friend and disciple of Paul IV., but, although he resembled that austere and stern Pontiff in many ways, he was of a kindlier and more sympathetic nature. He had all the good qualities, and none of the faults, of his severe predecessor. He was, like Paul, strictly just, unbending, austere, humble, but he was also affable, kind-hearted, courteous, and easy of access. He lived with the utmost frugality and simplicity amidst the splendours of the Vatican; he was at everyone's beck and call; particularly was he accessible to the poor and needy—he never refused to see them; indeed, he welcomed them with warm geniality, and always did his utmost to lighten their heavy burdens. His heart and his purse were both at the disposal of the dirtiest and most ragged beggars in his dominions.

This was an added bond between him, Charles, and Philip. All three loved the poor with passionate fervour, and though they differed in other traits, in this they were as one. Their friendship deepened daily. The Sovereign Pontiff implored Charles to remain in Rome and help him in his onerous duties, but the Archbishop could not forget his See, could not forget those wandering shepherds and sheep of his that were so

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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sorely in need of a head. Too long the pastors and people of Milan had been without a master; they had been led astray by strange doctrines, they had followed wandering lights, but they had *not* lost the Faith. They were still loyal children of Peter, but if left longer to their own devices they might, like their Swiss neighbours at the other side of the Alps, fall into heresy and unbelief. Charles realized this; he felt convinced that a strong hand and a steady head were necessary to bring order into this chaos, and he knew that it was God's will that his should be the hand, his the head, to accomplish this glorious work. Finally he prevailed on Pius V. to allow him to set out.

Cardinal Alessandrino had taken the name of Pius, and he is venerated in the Church as St. Pius V. Before starting, Charles endeavoured to persuade St. Philip Neri to give him, if not his two most distinguished and most loved sons, Tarugi and Cesare Baronio, at least two or three of the less well-known ones, in order to found a congregation of secular priests in Milan, such as Philip had already started in Rome, and which in 1575 was canonically erected into the Congregation of the Oratory.

Father Philip listened, and promised later on, if possible, to send a couple of the Fathers, but he did not seem very confident of being able to do so. He, however, smiled kindly on the Archbishop, remarking playfully: "You are an unconscionable

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## A Nest of Saints

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robber, and always want to carry off the best men with you."

This was true. Charles, with his wonderful gift of discerning the capacity of men, was generally successful in bringing to Milan holy and virtuous priests as well as men of learning and piety. This refusal to grant at once the Cardinal's request did not, however, cause any break in the friendship between the two saints. During the three months spent in Rome the intimacy between him and Father Philip deepened, and their affection for each other grew warmer day by day. Indeed, the Archbishop held the humble priest in such veneration that he frequently knelt before him and kissed his hand, begging him to bless him and to pray for him.

With the Jesuits the Archbishop was more successful, for he succeeded in obtaining some subjects from St. Francis Borgia, who had been elected General of the Order on the death of Lainez a short time previously. Charles and the former Duke of Gandia became good friends, the Archbishop in later years proving the value and sincerity of his affection in a very munificent manner, giving at the request of St. Francis Borgia a large sum of money towards the erection of the present Church of the Gesù. Probably, in spite of his ardent longing to commence his task of reforming the Diocese of Milan, Charles felt a pang of poignant regret on wishing farewell to that bevy of saints, the holy and austere Pontiff,

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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St. Pius V. ; the genial, devoted priest, St. Philip Neri ; and the ascetical, noble-minded General of the Jesuits, St. Francis Borgia. Then, there were other very dear and ~~many~~ friends of his, though they have not yet been canonized. There was Cesare Baronio, erudite yet simple, Philip's favourite son, who afterwards became a Cardinal and a famous writer. There was generous, enthusiastic Francesco Maria Tarugi, who in his day was Papal Legate in Spain, France, and Portugal ; Archbishop of Avignon, then of Sienna ; founder of the Oratory at Naples, and a Cardinal of the Church, but finally resigned all his dignities and died a humble Filippino at the Vallicella.

Then there was his director, the wise and prudent Jesuit, Father Ribera ; and there was that other charming, high-spirited, warm-hearted son of St. Ignatius, Pedro Ribadaneira, he who had been Il Santo's special pet—the wild boy who had by turns tormented and delighted the staid community—whom Ignatius had always defended, telling the chiding Fathers that the lad would one day be a holy man doing great things for God and His Church. The prophecy was verified, for Pedro Ribadaneira, who up to this had done much, was to do more for the salvation of souls, and, among his many and great deeds, the writing of the life of his loved and venerated Father is surely, if not one of the greatest, one which has earned for him the undying gratitude of posterity.

At this period Ribadaneira was Rector of the

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## A Nest of Saints

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Roman College, filling that important position with energy and tact.

To all these great and good men Charles said farewell, leaving Rome late in March, and traveling quickly to Milan. *En route* he spent a short time at Loreto to visit the Holy House. "An overwhelming devotion compels me to go there," he wrote to his sister, Anna Colonna. That sentiment often brought him there again, but this time he could not tarry long, so he hastened northwards, arriving in Milan on Friday, April 5.

"I purposely arrived unexpectedly on Friday," he wrote to Anna Colonna, "for I was determined to avoid a triumphal entry, and to prevent crowds of zealous people from coming to meet and pay their respects to me."

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## CHAPTER IX

### *THE MISSION OF CHARLES BORROMEO*

NEVER, perhaps, in the history of the Church were priests and people alike fallen into such a deplorable state of lassitude and decadence as during the sixteenth century. Heresy, abuses, laxity, all tended to separate her children from Holy Church. Luther had already alienated many nations, his adherents and followers increased daily; it seemed as though all the powers of hell were let loose to devastate Europe, and that the triumph of error and of evil was at hand.

Desperate as was the condition of Christendom, it was not past cure; there was one efficacious remedy—a true and orthodox Reformation. At the Council of Trent, the means necessary to employ for the achievement of this colossal work had been decreed, but the carrying out the decrees required an indefatigable, enlightened, zealous Apostle, one who would dare all, endure all, to attain the desired result.

In Rome, as we have seen, there were great and holy saints, and foremost amongst them, dominating them by his courage, his zeal, and his

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## The Mission of Charles Borromeo

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genius, was Charles Borromeo. He was the chosen Apostle of the Sacred Council; consequently he devoted to the reform of all the members of the Church—namely, the Cardinals, Bishops, Religious Orders, priests, and people—the ardour of his soul, the strength of his will, the power of his intellect.

The word "Reform," which is in all his letters, was in all his words, must have been deeply graven on his heart.

Reformation—that was the life-mission of Charles Borromeo; he was the living, ardent soul of the last and greatest of the Œcumenical Councils.

In the processes of his canonization it is stated that, "imitating St. Thomas of Canterbury and St. Ambrose, he unceasingly endeavoured to reform, and to defend with all his strength, ecclesiastical liberty and Christian discipline, both of which were in a deplorable state."

On his return to Milan he immediately took in hand this glorious task, working at it with indefatigable energy and tireless perseverance, yet skilfully avoiding over-eagerness, never going to extremes.

Everything and almost everyone in his immense diocese had to be altered and corrected. When we consider that it was one of the largest in Italy, covering an area of more than a hundred miles, including parts of Switzerland, and extending from the shores of the Mediterranean to the Adriatic,

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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containing two thousand churches, one hundred communities of men, seventy of women, and over three thousand priests, we are lost in wonder and admiration of the dauntless heroism that could serenely undertake such a herculean labour. Charles commenced with the clergy, but we will write but little on so painful a subject. We all know that the higher the position, the more sacred the office, the greater the fall; therefore we will give the fewest possible words to so melancholy a theme. It is enough for us to know that the reforming Archbishop changed all that was lax and evil in the lives of his clergy; order was restored, the wandering shepherds returned to their duties, generously responding to the stimulus of the overwhelming zeal of their Archbishop, and soon united with him in the fervour of reform. He established a congregation of discipline, and at it holy and learned priests met every week in the palace to discuss all matters concerning reformation, and the special requirements of each district and parish.

Charles gave a sublime example of disinterestedness and generosity by resigning all his benefices except the See of Milan. He also denuded himself of the marquisate of Romagna, the principality of Oria, and three armed galleys that he had inherited from his brother, Count Frederick. He bestowed upon his uncles all the lands of Arona, Angera, and the rest of the family estate on Lago Maggiore. He sold the splendid furniture, the art treasures,

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## The Mission of Charles Borromeo

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the jewels and silver, of his and of his brother's Roman palaces, giving the price to supply poor girls with fortunes. It is said that one day, having celebrated Mass at Santa Maria Maggiore, he dowered a hundred maidens who had come to him to ask him to help them to marry. He had had an income of 80,000 crowns, but when he had despoiled himself of his vast possessions only 20,000 remained to him. This he would willingly have given away, so devotedly did he love poverty; but it was necessary that he should have sufficient to pay his staff, maintain his household, exercise hospitality, and have ready money to give to those in pressing need of pecuniary assistance. He wished to renounce his offices of Grand Penitentiary and Archpriest of Santa Maria Maggiore. St. Pius V. absolutely refused to accept his resignation; Charles in vain pleaded that, as he resided at Milan, he could not possibly attend to the duties of these offices in Rome. The Pope was inflexible, remarking with finality: "No one can more worthily fill these positions than Charles, even though he is absent. As for the rest, if by chance there should be faults and mistakes in their administration, I will myself be answerable to God, who is the Sovereign Judge."

Charles worked so incessantly, never sparing himself, taking no rest, that his friends feared his health would give way. He made a point of visiting every corner of his vast diocese twice a year, and he frequently did the rounds of all

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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the numerous churches in Milan in a day. To kindle in the faithful the fervour and faith of the first ages of Christianity was his aim, and to succeed in it he was ready to brave the most menacing dangers and to labour with all his strength day and night. He allowed himself scarcely any sleep, for he generally rose at two in the morning to recite the Divine Office, and often started at four on long and wearisome journeys.

His friend Cardinal de Como wrote to him: "You will kill yourself with hard work; these unending labours will ruin your health. You will, I know, reply that I am always ringing the changes on the same song. It is true. Yes, I repeat it again and again, for it is the truth. For God's sake modify your zeal and do not overexert yourself so terribly, if you wish your labours to continue for any length of time."

Charles only smiled when he read this impassioned appeal, saying to Ferrerio: "If it is God's will that I should consume myself in His service, He will give to His Church a worthier pastor than Borromeo."

## CHAPTER X

### *A SCHOOL FOR SAINTS*

“No man lighteth a candle, and putteth it in a hidden place, nor under a bushel: but upon a candlestick, that they that come in may see the light.

“The light of thy body is thy eye.

“If thy eye be single, thy whole body will be lightsome; but if it be evil, thy body also will be darksome.”

Charles Borromeo was the eye, the light, of his whole diocese—nay, one may venture to say it, of all Italy; consequently he was in an especial manner the light and the eye of his own household.

“Take heed, therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness. If, then, thy whole body be lightsome, having no part of darkness, the whole shall be lightsome, and as a bright lamp shall enlighten thee.”

The ascetic Archbishop did not hide his light; it shone with a steady radiance, illuminating the darkness that surrounded him, and from its rays the ecclesiastics who formed his immediate entourage gained warmth and strength, enabling them to go forth courageously to reform the



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## St. Charles Borromeo

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world, and to bring the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ to those that sat in the outer darkness of unbelief and the inner gloom of decadence.

There were many celebrated and saintly men trained by the Cardinal in what to the superficial observer was only the commonplace household of an ordinary Archbishop, but was really a school of perfection directed by an heroic saint.

Among the foremost of these friends and disciples of Charles were Nicholas Ormanetto, afterwards Bishop of Padua and Legate to the Court of Madrid during the Pontificate of Gregory XIII.; John Baptist Castelle, Bishop of Rimini and Legate to the Court of France; John Francis Bonomi, who was several times Legate in Belgium, Germany, and Switzerland, and was Bishop of Vercelli; Jerome Frederick Triulzio, Bishop of Lodi, Envoy to the Duke of Savoy, and Governor of Rome; and, greatest and most famous of all, Cesare Speciano. He was, perhaps, the nearest and dearest to the heart of Charles; that is, if the austere Cardinal allowed himself a preference, Cesare was the favourite. He was also a favourite of the Popes, for both St. Pius V. and Gregory XIII. gave him important missions, sending him to the King of Spain and the Emperor Rodolphe to arrange delicate affairs that required diplomatic and judicious management. He was consecrated Bishop of Cremona, and died in the odour of ~~sanctity~~.

There were many others in this school of ~~sanctity~~

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## A School for Saints

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who afterwards held the highest positions in the Church—men who by their talents, virtues, and wise administration of their dioceses, were living witnesses of the sanctity of the holy Cardinal whose disciples they had been in the days of their youth.

We will now give a very short account of the rules and regulations of the household that was, as it were, a forcing-bed for saints. It was composed principally of ecclesiastics, and was monastic and austere in character. All the members rose early, assembled in the chapel for Matins, meditation, and the Office of the Blessed Virgin; then those who were ordained priests celebrated Holy Mass. They took their meals together in silence; either a pious book was read aloud, or an improving homily was delivered by each in turn. During several years the Cardinal dined with them; he rarely ate meat, and never drank wine, but he was always most particular that the wines and viands partaken of by the community should be of the best quality.

Wednesdays, Fridays and the eves of many feasts of devotion, were kept as fast-days. Lent commenced on Quinquagesima Sunday, and, following the Ambrosian rule, Advent began from the first Sunday after the feast of St. Martin.

During these seasons they refrained from meat and milk. They frequently assembled together to take the discipline; they spent their hours of recreation in chats on spiritual subjects; and they

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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finished the day by an examination of conscience. Often Charles himself read aloud during meals; he was truly the servant of all. "But whosoever will be the greatest amongst you, let him be your minister. And he that will be first among you shall be your servant."

He did little kindnesses for them, lighting their lamps, seeing that they were warmly clad, examining carefully the sleeping apartments of the lowest domestics, even of the scullions and stable-boys, to see that they were comfortably housed and that they wanted for nothing. When any of his staff were ill, or even slightly indisposed, his attentions redoubled; he would personally supervise their meals, and often told the procurator to spare no expense to get them anything they fancied.

"If an egg or an orange costs a ducat<sup>1</sup> apiece, get them as many as they like," he ordered.

He was so considerate that, when he had to pass from one room to another at night, he invariably took off his shoes, lest he might wake the sleepers.

He spent 18,000 scudi in the restoration of the episcopal palace, but in this magnificent dwelling-house he occupied a tiny garret under the roof. It was the poorest and most miserable cell, exposed to the summer's heat and the winter's cold. In it he slept in a chair or on a wooden table.

When one visits this wretched room, one realizes something of the austerity and frugality of the great Cardinal, who in his early youth

<sup>1</sup> A ducat was worth fifteen shillings of our money.

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## A School for Saints

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loved splendour and delighted in artistic surroundings, but who in his young manhood embraced with whole-hearted generosity the poverty and mortification that have always been so dear to the saints.

We cannot, however, better describe Charles Borromeo than by quoting Manzoni's description of Cardinal Frederick Borromeo, the cousin and successor of our saint in the See of Milan, for it gives us a true and accurate portrait of the character and virtues of the reforming Archbishop.

In the "Promessi Sposi," that masterpiece of Italian literature, the celebrated Italian author writes thus :

" He was one of those men, rare in every generation, who have with undiverted tenacity of purpose employed remarkable talents, the resources of great wealth, the advantages of high rank, and an unwearying diligence, in the search and exercise of the noblest aims and principles. His life resembles a rivulet which, issuing limpid from the rock, flows in a ceaseless and unruffled, though lengthened course through various lands, and, clear and limpid still, falls at last into the ocean. Amidst comforts and luxuries he attended, even from childhood, to those lessons of self-denial and humility, and those maxims on the vanity of worldly pleasure and the sinfulness of pride, on true dignity and true riches, which, whether acknowledged or not in the heart, have been transmitted from generation to generation in the most

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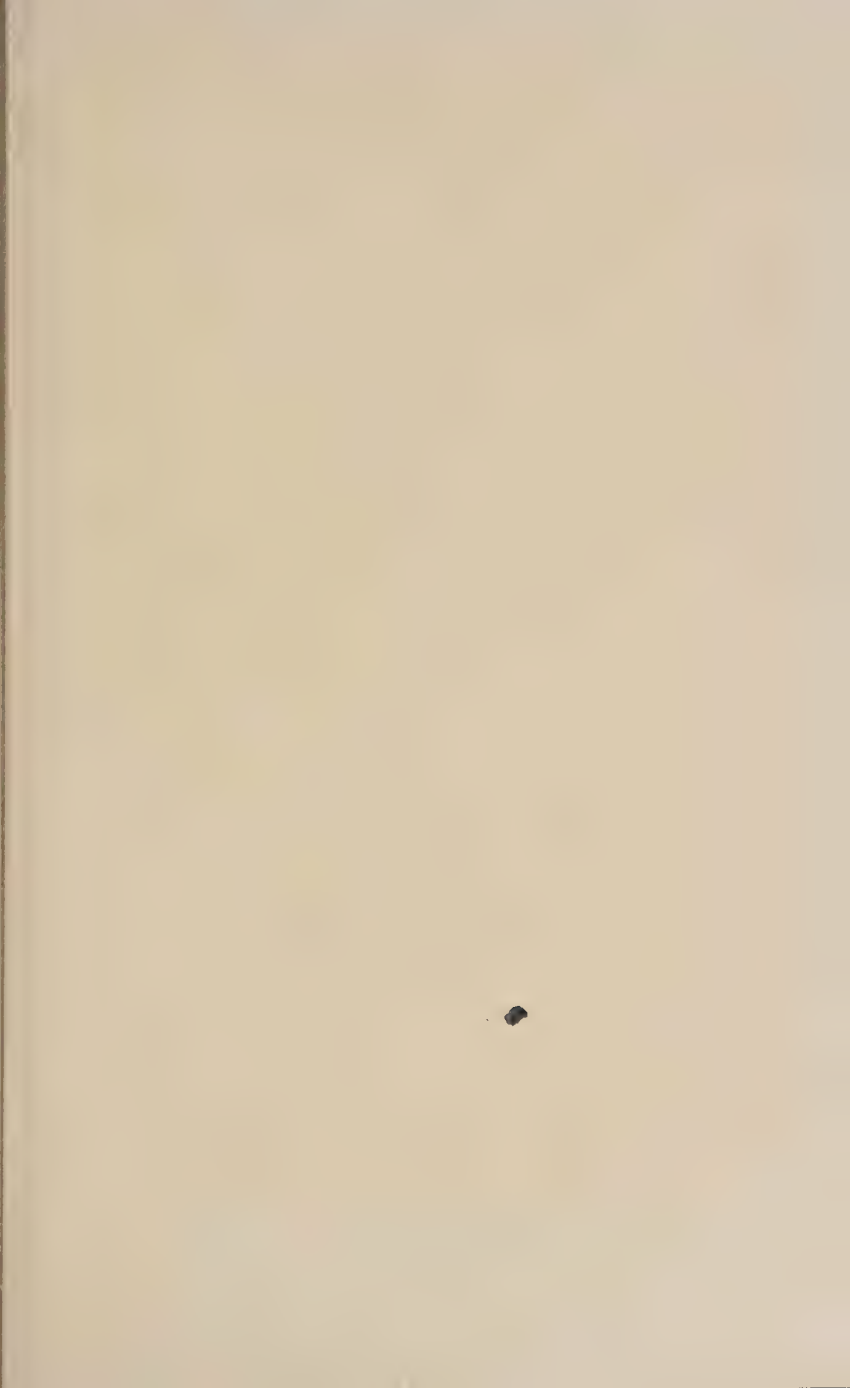
## Saint Charles Borromeo

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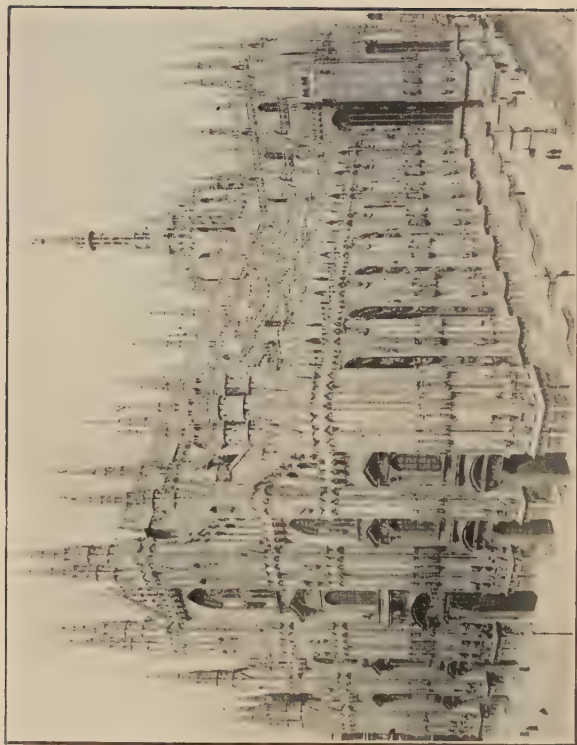
elementary instruction in religion. His life was one continual overflowing charity. This inexhaustible charity appeared not only in his almsgiving, but in his whole behaviour. Easy of access to all, he considered a cheerful countenance and an affectionate courtesy particularly due to those in the lower ranks of life. Very seldom did he exhibit anger, being admired for his mild and imperturbable gentleness. When he showed severity, it was to those in authority whom he found guilty of avarice or negligence or any other conduct opposed to the spirit of their high vocation. Upon what affected his own interest or glory he never showed either joy, regret, anxiety, or eagerness. Careful and indefatigable in ordering and governing everything, where he considered it his duty to do so, he shrank from intruding into the affairs of others, and even when solicited generally refused."

Can we wonder that the men who lived for many years in closest intimacy with one so ~~and~~ and perfect should in their turn have gone forth to bear testimony, by the holiness and purity of their lives, to the wisdom and sanctity of their beloved chief?

Trained by a ~~man~~, they lived noble and virtuous lives, and their learning and piety helped to rekindle in the hearts of their flocks the ardent faith and consuming love of God, and of charity towards each other, which they themselves practised with such sublime heroism.







EXTERIOR OF THE DUOMO OF MILAN.

To face p. 63.

## CHAPTER XI

### *THE STONE OF THE FOUNDER, THE CROSS OF THE SAINT*

THE glorious colossal Cathedral of Milan, rightly called the "eighth wonder of the world," for it is ethereal yet gigantic, cloud-like and graceful and yet majestic, is fittingly dedicated to "Mariæ Nascenti." The inscription on the façade tells us this, so does the delicate fairy gold statue, poised as though on the point of flying heavenward, on the summit of the tower over the dome. It is beautiful both within and without, this magnificent temple that is dedicated to the birth of the Mother of God. It is a dream of white splendour, this basilica built of purest marble, glimmering sometimes rose red with an unearthly radiance, when the setting sun touches with fairy light its airy pinnacles, or shining silver white at noonday, when caressed and warmed by the full splendour of the brilliant Italian sunshine. We gaze spell-bound, awestruck by its surpassing loveliness; words fail us, and we can only feel that it is a mute witness of the eternal heavenward flight of the souls of men, their unquenchable longing through

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all time for beauty and grace of form, and their increasing thirst for perfection of stature and outline. Far be it from me to attempt to describe this superb, colossal white marble Duomo, this embodied exhalation of purity and faith. It is the pride and joy of the Milanese of to-day, in their tram-ridden, noisy, commercial, twentieth-century city, as it was their glory and delight in the sixteenth century, the days when Cardinal-Archbishop Charles Borromeo, having succeeded in reforming the secular clergy, turned his attention to the reformation of the Cathedral and its Chapter.

To us it is almost divine; it is a dream too sublime, too heavenly, for criticism or analysis. Charles, however, knew it was his duty, not only to criticize, but to reform, and he set to work with his usual sound common-sense to perfect the dream, to bring order into the house of God, into the dwelling-place that should have been devoted to silent prayer or to the singing of canticles in praise of the Most High, but into which, as into most of the churches in Italy of that period, laxity and corruption had gradually crept, preventing prayer, making a mock of reverence.

Canons and functions alike had to be purified. The reforming Cardinal began by somewhat despotically turning out the dead and gone lords of Milan, the Visconti and Sforza, and all that to them pertained; he swept ruthlessly away their tombs, their escutcheons, banners, standards;

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## The Stone of the Founder

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even the paintings representing their heroic deeds, and their armorial bearings, were all cast out ; they and their works were anathema in death as in life to the high-souled, stern ascetic. We know that he was but carrying out the decrees of the Council of Trent, that he acted in unflinching obedience to those decrees, for they strictly prohibited the burial of bodies in monuments in churches ; yet we cannot help regretting that he was so very zealous and inflexible, for he effectually and uncompromisingly destroyed all the picturesque, priceless historic associations with a ruthless and unsparing hand ; he swept away all the relics of the thrilling romantic past, destroying alike the emblems of its beauty, its truth, and its superb pride.

Men say that the interior of the Cathedral of Milan is the grandest in the world. It is undoubtedly true, and if Charles Borromeo had not been consumed with such burning zeal, had not been so inflexibly determined to carry out in the letter as well as the spirit the decrees of the Sacred Council, it would be, not only the grandest, but the most romantically historical, and would be impregnated with the most fascinating medievalism.

“The zeal of Thy house hath eaten me up.” It had indeed devoured the ascetic Archbishop, and though it was right and fitting that he should prevent the living from trafficking in the Duomo, from chatting, gossiping, and taking short-cuts through its shadowy aisles, though it was expe-

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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dient that he should say to them in the words of the Gospel, "Take these things hence, and make not the house of My Father a house of traffic," yet we wish that he had allowed the dead to rest in peace.

Charles, however, while destroying with one hand, gave new beauty and grace with the other; he did much to embellish the *interior*, though many think that he and his successor, Cardinal Frederick Borromeo, or the architects employed by them, succeeded to a certain extent in spoiling the exterior, changing the pure Gothic of the original design; and what they left undone in the way of marring the harmonious original design, Napoleon I. consummated. In the interior Charles restored and embellished the choir, raising the high-altar, so that it could be visible to all the congregation. The beautiful and richly ornamented tabernacle was the gift of our saint's uncle, Pius IV. Over it is an exquisite bronze ciborium, a fine piece of sixteenth-century workmanship.

The handsomely carved gilt pulpits were also given and designed by Charles, though they were not finished during his lifetime, but in that of his cousin, Cardinal Frederick Borromeo. The Archbishop found it absolutely necessary to close two of the principal doors, for the citizens used them to facilitate their progress from one part of the town to another, dashing through the house of God as though it were a convenient short-cut,

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## The Stone of the Founder

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never pausing even to genuflect before the Blessed Sacrament, but either rushing through at headlong speed, or slowly sauntering along with their companions, laughing, jesting, singing profane songs. Charles soon stopped this scandal, and when the doors were walled up he erected beautiful and devotional altars in front of them. He also abolished the plays and mummeries that for centuries at certain periods had taken place in the Duomo. These frolics had given rise to much evil, and had been productive of but little good. Originally instituted by Gian Galeazzo Visconti as a means of procuring money towards the building of the cathedral, they had degenerated into mad pranks and licentious farces. The reforming Cardinal would have infinitely preferred never to receive a penny for the church than to have got millions by such exhibitions of sinful frivolity and vice. However, in the long-run he gained instead of losing, for the people generously gave such large donations and munificent gifts that the money that would have been made by the mummeries was amply compensated for. The Cardinal wished his cathedral to be a model to the rest of his diocese; he therefore devoted his time and attention to the regulation of its Chapter. The Canons had each and all such a number of benefices that they were absolutely unable to attend to the services of the cathedral, and often neglected the daily recital of the Divine Office.



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## St. Charles Borromeo

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Charles had given an heroic example of disinterestedness: he had resigned all his benefices except the See of Milan. When he asked the Canons of the cathedral and the priests of the diocese to do likewise, they could not refuse to imitate him; one man, one benefice, was henceforth the rule, and in ordaining this Charles was again acting in obedience to the decrees of the Council of Trent.

Many of the Canons were badly off, and, indeed, their poverty had in several cases been their reason for accepting a multiplicity of benefices. Charles came to their assistance, suppressed a few useless canonries, and divided their incomes among the Canons in residence. They were now able to devote themselves unreservedly to their duties in the cathedral, preaching, hearing confessions, instructing the faithful, and performing their sacred functions with dignity and reverence. Charles decreed that the Canons of the cathedral should, when in choir, wear during the greater part of the year the red robes of a Cardinal, and that during Lent and Advent they should still follow the example of the Princes of the Church, changing the red robe for violet. Consequently they were generally called by the people *I signori cardinali del duomo*.

Charles, we know, was passionately fond of music, and he proceeded to reform the choir, the music of which, as in Rome and throughout Italy, had become degenerate and worldly in character.

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## The Stone of the Founder

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The singers were divided into different choirs, and they were only allowed to use the organ; all other instruments were strictly prohibited. It is a curious fact that in Milan the liturgy is in some ways different from that used over the rest of the world. In the ritual of the Mass there are important divergencies, for in all the churches there they adhere to the old Ambrosian rite. It is simpler and sterner than ours, and the Milanese have been allowed for centuries by the Sovereign Pontiff to use it, because they are warmly attached to it, looking upon it as a traditional liturgy, and as an heirloom from ancient times.

Of course, in matters of dogma and doctrine the Milanese believe just what all Catholics believe; in no way does their faith differ from ours; it is only in their ritual that there are divergencies. The Ambrosian Liturgy is said to have been compiled by St. Barnabas. It has certainly several Eastern attributes, and evidently belongs to the liturgical school of Ephesus. Its chief characteristic is an extra reading of Scripture in addition to the Epistle and Gospel. This is called the *Prophetia*, and is taken from the Old Testament. Then, also, the deacon makes a curious proclamation of silence before the Epistle. There are a lay offering of the oblations, some unusual litanies, an addition to the prayer for consecration, closely resembling the one used in the Greek rite, and on Palm Sunday and at Easter there are many ceremonies similar to those used

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in the Greek Liturgy. Another rather puzzling difference is the change in the calendar, the numbering of the Sundays after Pentecost. There are also slight differences in the shape and use of the censers, the incensing of the altar and clergy, and the holding of the Book of the Gospel.

The music is infinitely grander and more impressive, and, as the organ is the only instrument used, naturally Charles, who wished to preserve in every detail the traditional liturgy, sternly insisted on the abolition of all others.

It is a strange and ever-to-be-remembered experience to assist at Holy Mass in the dream-like, shadowy cathedral, the dim religious light just sufficient to cast a mystic glory over the lofty and spacious aisles, the beautiful mouldings, and the light, graceful arches, to fall with soft radiance on the magnificent high-altar with its rich canopy, to light up the golden pulpits and the pure white marble screen round the sanctuary, and to turn to a deeper crimson the red robes of *I signori cardinali del duomo*.

Then the glorious music! the solemn, majestic chant, that seems not of earth, but of heaven!

It is a holy and restful experience in the midst of the hurry and bustle of our *vie de colis*; it stands out clear and distinct, and the memory of its beauty and peace is an enduring pleasure.

I cherish another—nay, two other reminiscences of that fair white Duomo. The two things that most strongly appealed to me in that colossal

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## The Stone of the Founder

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wilderness of stately beauty, that garden of exotic loveliness, were the Stone of the Founder the Crucifix of the Saint. Entering the porch from the sunlit, noisy, tram-ridden piazza, one sees on the right hand, embedded in the wall, the stone recording the event that in 1386 Gian Galeazzo Maria Visconti, first Duke of Milan, laid the foundation of this colossal pile of white marble, the Duomo of Milan, and that it was a votive offering from him to Heaven for a son to inherit his great possessions. Thus it was dedicated, not to the Birth of Christ, but to the Birth of the Mother of Christ—*Mariæ Nascenti*.<sup>1</sup>

On the third altar in the nave, on the left-hand side, is the plain wooden crucifix that Charles Borromeo, the Reformer and Apostle of Milan, carried in procession through the streets of the city during the terrible plague of 1576.

These two so different objects have a strange charm and fascination, representing as they do, one the height and summit of human grandeur and vaulting ambition, the other the sublime self-sacrifice, the superabundant, overflowing charity, of the follower of the Crucified.

<sup>1</sup> The following inscription is graven on the stone: "El Principio dil Duomo d' Milano F. V. Nell' anno 1386."

## CHAPTER XII

### *THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE STRUGGLE*

So far Charles had succeeded beyond his hopes in the reforms he had taken in hand. He had reason to congratulate himself, and he was undoubtedly pleased and deeply grateful to Almighty God, who had worked such rapid and salutary changes through his instrumentality.

In 1569, however, clouds overcast the serene sky; threatenings of the terrific storm that was soon to burst over his devoted head were distinctly audible. The struggle between the ecclesiastical and civil power commenced. It was to last during the lifetime of our saint, and he was to exhaust himself in the supreme efforts he made defending the rights, privileges, and even the authority, of the Church against the State. At this period Milan was under the dominion of Spain, and was governed for Philip II. by a grandee of that country, Gabriel della Gueva, Duke d'Albuquerque. He was a just and worthy man; indeed, Charles said of him: "I could not have believed it possible that the Governor was so good, religious, and so devoted to the service of God."

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## The Commencement of the Struggle

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But this good, religious man was weak and easily led. It was not from him that Charles encountered opposition ; but when the storm of persecution burst the Governor lacked, not perhaps the moral courage, but certainly the necessary tact and energy to stem it.

It was the Senate of Milan who, jealous of the authority and popularity of the reforming Archbishop, finding that his decrees and those of the Provincial Council were likely to affect them in a disagreeable and undesired way, compelling them, whether they wished it or not, to purify their own lives and the lives of their fellow-citizens—it was the Senate who endeavoured to throw off the yoke they found neither light nor pleasant, the burden that was too heavy for them.

The supreme authority rested in their hands, yet they were resolved that the Governor should bear his share of the crusade against the holy and generous Archbishop. They started by accusing him of hiding deep and dangerous designs under a mask of humility and charity. They said that he was ambitious and avaricious, seeking only his own interests, endeavouring to secure to himself gold and lands, probably aiming at supreme power ; he was an intriguer, a dangerous person, and they endeavoured to persuade the Duke d'Albuquerque that he was weakly allowing the royal authority to be usurped by wily ecclesiastics, headed by an adroit and clever schemer.

They only awaited a favourable opportunity to



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attack the Archbishop. One soon came. In the city there were several laymen whose evil lives were a scandal. Charles frequently admonished them, but they turned a deaf ear to his admonitions, and continued recklessly to give free vent to their wicked passions.

“Woe to the world because of scandals! For it must needs be that scandals come; but nevertheless, woe to that man by whom the scandal cometh.” Vainly the saintly Archbishop tried to convince these stubborn and evil men of their wickedness, imploring them to change their lives, and no longer be a hindrance and a scandal to the other members of his flock.

“And if thy hand or foot scandalize thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee. It is better for thee to go into life maimed or lame, than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thy eye scandalize thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee. It is better for thee having one eye to enter into life than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.”

Acting on the Gospel precepts, Charles cast from him the hand and the eye that were a source of scandal to the little ones; in other words, he threw the obdurate offenders into prison. It was the signal for an outburst. The Senate shrieked angry denunciations, but dared not openly rebel; for the Cardinal, according to the old custom, maintained a secular body of men, with an officer of justice at their head. This troop carried arms,

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## The Commencement of the Struggle

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and had the right to imprison offenders against morals or religion. The Senate endeavoured to prevent these men from fulfilling their duties, threatening them with sundry and severe penalties if they obeyed their lawful chief. They even told these simple soldiers that they disobeyed the laws of the Governor by carrying arms. In the words of the Jews of old, they cried out: "You are not Cæsar's friend if you persist in doing this thing, in obeying an arrogant Churchman instead of your lawful Sovereign." The Captain of the Guard and his men were loyal to their Cardinal-Archbishop, with the result that the Captain was arrested by the Senate, cruelly ill-treated, and finally driven from the city, with the warning that if he ever returned he would be hung as high as Aman.

We can fancy the grief that this outrageous conduct caused the tender heart of Charles. Weeping profusely, he threw himself on his knees before the tabernacle, begging our Lord to give him the necessary grace to pass through this stormy time, and imploring the Holy Ghost to guide his steps in the difficult and thorny path that lay before him. Invigorated by prayer and fasting—for severe fasting was, as we shall see later on, his cure for most ailments, whether of soul or body—he immediately took decided measures to defend the rights and liberties of Holy Church. He excommunicated the Chief of Police and all who were implicated in the arrest and banishment of his Captain; they, the President of

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the Senate, and two senators, were summoned to appear in Rome without delay.

There was a short interval, during which the opposing parties, each in their different ways, sought for fresh vigour and strength to carry on the struggle.

The holy Archbishop had recourse to prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. His enemies took advantage of the cessation of hostilities to influence the Governor. They succeeded at length in persuading him to give what they told him would be an undeniable proof of his loyalty to the King.

He had been very displeased at the imprisonment and banishment of the Archbishop's Captain by the Senate, and had in his turn sent to gaol a few of their adherents who had torn down the sentence of excommunication from the doors of the archiepiscopal palace and of the churches ; but now, yielding to their representations, he decreed that all persons who in any way encroached on the royal jurisdiction were guilty of treason. The decree was couched in such vague terms that no one knew what it meant—what was treason, and what was not. It caused endless confusion, everything was at sixes and at sevens ; lawyers refused to plead before the ecclesiastical tribunals, fearing lest by doing so they might offend against the King's prerogative.

While affairs were in this unsatisfactory condition, the storm once more burst forth and with redoubled violence. The Chapter of the collegiate

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## The Commencement of the Struggle

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church of Santa Maria della Scala was under the patronage of the King of Spain. This church had been founded by Regina della Scala, the wife of Bernabo Visconti, in 1381, and was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. In order to distinguish it from the numerous churches in the city already dedicated to the Mother of God, it added the maiden name of its foundress, della Scala. She established a Chapter, and the members had always been appointed by the Duke of Milan. In 1530, Francesco Sforza II., the last Duke, had applied to Clement VII. to allow the Canons to be exempted from the jurisdiction of the See of Milan. The Pope granted their request, but only on the understanding that the Archbishop should also give his consent. This consent had never been granted; consequently the privilege did not hold good. The Chapter needed reform as much as, perhaps more than, any of the others, and, with the intention of judging for himself, Charles announced that he was about to visit it. The Canons refused to receive him, pleading exemption from his jurisdiction. The Archbishop, after consulting the Sovereign Pontiff, formally declared their claim was invalid, and on August 30, 1569, he signified his resolve to pay them a formal visit. No sooner did the Canons receive this message than they closed all the doors, and retired to the cemetery, but not before they had placed armed men in front of the building to prevent the entrance of the Archbishop.

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Charles left the Duomo clothed in his episcopal vestments ; two priests on horseback rode in front of him, carrying the episcopal cross and the Cardinal's insignia. He followed mounted on a mule. As he rode forth his friend, Count Gaspar de Magno, implored him to turn back, saying : " Take care lest these disputes lose you the whole city."

" In the defence of the honour of God and of His Church I will never lose this city," the Cardinal replied with quiet dignity.

As soon as he arrived at Santa Maria della Scala, the soldiers employed by the Canons rushed towards him, and endeavoured to prevent his dismounting, seizing the reins of his mule and of the horses of his companions. Notwithstanding their menaces and violence, the Cardinal quietly got off his mule, and, looking with undaunted courage at the fifty swords that were raised to bar his way, he passed slowly and majestically towards the door of the church, carrying the crucifix in his hands, his eyes fixed with loving confidence on the image of our crucified Saviour.

Castello, the Vicar-General, succeeded in fastening to the door the censure the Canons incurred by their revolt, but it was immediately snatched down and torn into a thousand pieces.

The Canons themselves now appeared upon the scene, and, standing in front of the entrance, declared they would never allow the Archbishop to go in. A scene of indescribable confusion

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followed. Midst the ringing of bells, the clashing of arms, the yells of an infuriated mob, Charles stood calm and majestic, unmoved by the uproar around him. He held aloft the image of the Crucified, and spoke words of mingled reproach, entreaty and command to the angry Canons and the rough soldiers, but his voice was drowned by shouts of "Spain! Spain!" mingled with oaths and coarse invective from these madmen, who not only banged the door in his face, but brutally attacked him and his followers. Blinded by rage, they actually fired upon, and struck in several places, the sacred Emblem of our Salvation. Charles pressed his lips with loving reverence to the mutilated crucifix, and then, raising his eyes to heaven; prayed silently.

Then the insolent Pietro Barbesta, a priest of Pavia, who was acting the part of devil's advocate for the refractory Canons, rang a bell and proclaimed in stentorian tones that the Cardinal-Archbishop Charles Borromeo had incurred ecclesiastical censure, and was suspended from his functions for having endeavoured to violate the privilege of the Church of Santa Maria della Scala. This absurd sentence he afterwards placarded in various parts of the city.

Charles listened unmoved, and it was only when he thoroughly realized the absolute uselessness of both prayers and commands that he solemnly pronounced the words of excommunication and retired to the Duomo.



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There in humble prayer before the tabernacle he besought our Lord to pardon the misguided Canons and the rough soldiers, and implored the Holy Ghost to direct him how best to act for the honour and glory of God and of His Church.

Fortified and enlightened by the Divine grace in his visit to the Blessed Sacrament, he renewed the sentence of excommunication, placed the Church of Santa Maria della Scala under an interdict, and specified by name the Canon—a native of Calabria—who had headed the revolt.

Pius V. was horrified when he heard of this dreadful riot. He wrote a most consoling and affectionate letter to his beloved son Charles, and he emphatically declared that all Barbesta had said and done was null and void, and ordered him and the Calabrian immediately to repair to Rome.

The Calabrian never arrived there, for he met with a sudden and awful death, and the impious wretch who fired upon the cross also came to a terrible end two days after the appalling act he had so wantonly committed. Their tragic fate inspired the Canons with salutary fear of the judgment of God, and they lived in mortal dread lest a like doom should fall on them. To avert the evil fate, the Provost came to the Archbishop, and on his knees humbly begged forgiveness; the others followed his example, and Charles, who though stern was magnanimous, generously par-

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doned them, treating them with great kindness and charity.

It was with difficulty that he persuaded St. Pius V. to allow him to deal with them himself, for the Sovereign Pontiff was justly incensed at the injury done to the rights of the Church, and at the insults offered to the Cardinal he so honoured and loved ; and he feared the saintly prelate would be too lenient with the offenders.

At last, however, Charles prevailed ; he got permission from Rome to work his will upon the once refractory, but now penitent, Canons. He required them to make a public confession ; he then gave them absolution and accompanied them back to their cloister, where he formally reinstated them, after having offered up a prayer of thanksgiving.

## CHAPTER XIII

### *THE HUMBLE ONES*

THE Canons of Santa Maria della Scala were not the only perverse and stubborn religious with whom Charles had to deal. A reformer must needs meet with opposition, for those who require to be reformed seldom relish the process, and often refuse to submit. Among the Religious Orders that at this period required a thorough and severe reformation, the principal one was the *Umiliati* or Humble Ones. This Order, that was now humble only in name, had been founded in the eleventh century by a few Milanese nobles. At its foundation it was something like the Third Order of St. Francis, consisting of men and women living in their own homes, but bound by solemn promises to lead lives of humility, industry, and comparative poverty. A century later they adopted in part the rule of St. Bernard, and very soon a second Order was formed, still composed both of men and women, and even of married couples, who lived in separate cloisters, and bound themselves to the strictest observance of religious duties and of moral virtues. Later on a third

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## The Humble Ones

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Order arose ; this was composed of men only, and they took Holy Orders and were styled Canons. For some years they were very troublesome ; indeed, they were condemned by successive Popes for going about preaching strange doctrines, and declaring themselves practically independent of Rome, for their rule had never been confirmed by the Holy See.

However, Innocent III., recognizing that, in spite of their seeming lax orthodoxy, they really were holy and zealous men and women, doing much good in their own way and having a powerful influence over the people, resolved to form them into a regular Order, to give them a fixed and binding rule, and compel them to live in monasteries and submit in all things to Rome. This he did ; the Third Order, consisting of ordained priests, became, as is usual, the First and most important, and those who continued to reside in their own homes were then called the Third Order. Their original love of poverty and simplicity was unfortunately replaced by a desire for riches and power. They became enormously wealthy, owned vast possessions in the form of commendas, prebends, etc., and had grown arrogant and unmanageable ; the members were very few, and were nearly all nobles who, under the cloak of religion, led evil and disorderly lives.

It was with this degenerate Order that Charles had now to cope. He found them obstinate and stiff-necked, determined to hold on to their gold

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and lands. The Archbishop applied to Rome, and obtained two briefs, one of which empowered him to employ a part of the revenues of the Superiors of the monasteries to found a novitiate for their Order.

The other gave him absolute authority to enforce the regulations he deemed necessary to effect a thorough reform. Under these circumstances the *Frati Umiliati* appeared to yield, but they only apparently submitted in order the better to carry out their treacherous designs.

They considered that if this too ascetical and austere Archbishop were sent to Paradise their troubles would cease, and they could enjoy undisturbed the possessions of which, in his too great zeal for the purity and poverty to which they were vowed, he wished to deprive them. Charles safely sent to another and better world, they could return to their former easy-going, luxurious existence. They resolved to assassinate him, and for this purpose they bought over one of their own brethren, Geronimo Donato, who for the sum of forty crowns agreed to do the dastardly deed. On Wednesday, October 26, 1569, the Cardinal and his household assembled as usual in the chapel for Matins. It was about half-past one in the morning. They commenced the Office, the choir joining in a motet chanting the words of Scripture: "Tempus est ut revertar ad eum qui me misit" (It is time that I return to Him who sent me); and when they sang, "Non

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## The Humble Ones

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turbetur cor vestrum, neque formidet" (Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid), a loud report rang through the chapel and a sudden flash blinded the spectators. Donato had fired an arquebuse at the kneeling Archbishop; a ball struck his spine, a piece of lead shaped like a thimble pierced his soutane, but he was not wounded. He, however, having heard the report, seen the flash, and felt himself hit, thought he was seriously injured, though he felt no pain; nevertheless he did not move, but, signing to the choristers to continue singing, he quietly waited until Matins were finished.

When the devotions were over, they found a ball just behind him, and several pieces of lead embedded in the walls; there was a black mark where the ball had pierced his robe, and one of the pieces of lead had actually touched his body, darkening and bruising the skin. He bore the mark of the bruise until his dying day. The would-be murderer escaped in the darkness, and for a long time was undiscovered, but he and his accomplices were captured in 1570, and were condemned to death.

On August 11 of that year they were publicly executed. Donato, at the moment that he passed the Archbishop on his way to the scaffold, had the hand that fired the shot struck off by the executioner. He and his companions confessed, and expressed sincere sorrow and repentance, on the scaffold.



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Charles had vainly interceded for them, begging the Sovereign Pontiff to pardon them; but he was inexorable, and, having first degraded, handed them over to the civil authorities. In answer to all the Cardinal's prayers and pleas, expressing with the greatest earnestness his confidence that they would mend their ways if their lives were spared, St. Pius V. only replied: "*Si potest Æthiops mutare pellem suam?*" (Can the Ethiopian change his skin?) The attempted assassination of the reforming Cardinal in the end was the means of bringing about a good understanding between him and the Governor; for as it was true in the time of the Apostles, so was it in the days of Charles Borromeo, so is it still in our own days, so will it always be, that "to them who love God all things work together unto good."

The Duke d'Albuquerque was stupefied with grief and dismay when he heard the news of the attempted assassination. He hastened to the archiepiscopal palace, cordially embraced the Cardinal, and united with his numerous friends and retainers in expressions of sympathy. He declared he would not rest until he had brought the culprit and his accomplices to justice, but Charles said gently that he had pardoned the poor misguided man, and that he hoped he would not have to pay the penalty of his crime, adding with a slight touch of sarcasm: "All this solicitude of yours would be much more

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## The Humble Ones

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advantageously employed in defending the episcopal rights and the liberties of the Church than in protecting the person of the Bishop!"

The Governor commanded an armed guard to watch over the Archbishop's safety day and night. This guard Charles succeeded in getting rid of after a couple of days, and went about as usual, going and coming alone and unprotected, and continuing to allow all sorts and conditions of people to penetrate even into his bedroom at all hours, whenever they had business to transact, or, as was generally the case, when they were in need of assistance and asked for favours.

His friends reproached him with this carelessness, telling him that it was not right to endanger a life so precious in the sight of God and so necessary to His Church, but Charles always replied with quiet confidence: "I owe my preservation to Almighty God; He will continue to protect me; what He takes care of is well guarded."

The joy of the Milanese was great at the miraculous escape of their beloved pastor, the rooms of his palace were thronged with nobles and citizens, rich and poor, all vying with each other in expressions of loyalty and devotion. Crowds followed him when he went out, and the vast aisles of the Duomo were invariably thronged when he officiated.

A reaction had taken place; even the refractory Canons of Santa Maria della Scala were apparently rejoiced at the miracle, and it was at this time

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that they came over in a body to the Cardinal, and all willingly accepted his reforms; but the best result was that Philip II., shocked and pained at the dastardly attempt made on the life of so saintly and irreproachable a prelate, wrote to the Duke d'Albuquerque commanding him immediately to revoke the edict concerning the royal jurisdiction, adding that he wished all religious bodies to be under the superintendence of the Archbishop, and that he should freely visit and correct them. He also exhorted the Governor to leave no stone unturned in his search for the criminal, and always to show the utmost affection for the Cardinal, and to protect his person with zeal and diligence.

The Sovereign Pontiff was also much affected by this cowardly attempt at assassination, and wrote in the kindest and most fatherly way to his "beloved son Charles," announcing his determination of suppressing the Order of the *Umiliati*. Charles pleaded their cause in vain; the Pope was adamant, although the General of the Order, and the monks who had been more or less faithful to their vows, went to Rome, and, throwing themselves at his feet, protested their innocence of the crime and their abhorrence of it, and solemnly promised to accept all the reforms of their Archbishop. St. Pius V. would not listen to them, but on February 7, 1571, he issued a Bull declaring the Order of the *Umiliati* suppressed, and directed their convents, which numbered a

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hundred, to be closed. He assigned to each monk<sup>1</sup> a sufficient pension to enable him to live in a frugal and modest manner, and he reserved the right to dispose of their vast possessions.

Charles asked him to give their largest and most famous monastery, that of the Brera, to the Jesuits, but the Pope refused; and although Charles over and over again entreated him to do so, his decision was unalterable.

Ormaneto, who acted as the Cardinal's agent in Rome, wrote to him: "It is absolutely useless for you to importune His Holiness, for, when he once refuses a request, nothing will afterwards induce him to grant it; in fact, it annoys him to be asked again."

However, in the following pontificate—that of Gregory XIII. — Charles realized his dream, and, getting permission from him, was able to hand over the monastery of the Brera to the Jesuits, and it became under their administration a celebrated University; but in 1772 they were dispossessed by the State, who rebuilt it, and turned it into a National Library, a Museum and Picture-Gallery.

At the present day it is a massive building with a double-galleried cortile. In the centre of the cortile is Canova's statue of Napoleon Bonaparte; the Biblioteca Nazionale occupies a part of the

<sup>1</sup> There were only two or three monks in each monastery; they had large revenues, and they led a luxurious and indolent existence.

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building, and the Pinacoteca is entered from the upper loggia. In it are many rare and beautiful paintings by Milanese, Florentine, and Venetian artists. Indeed, it contains one of the finest collections in Northern Italy, but there is nothing in it of interest to a student of the life of St. Charles Borromeo.

The Archbishop also reformed the Franciscans. They also had fallen into a state of decadence, and had some time previously injudiciously endeavoured to reform themselves by dividing into several branches; and by reason of their separation, they all became degenerate, having lost the restraining and beneficial influence of a supreme head.

Charles saw that the only way to restore order and regularity was to reunite the different branches, and to found a novitiate in which the spirit of poverty, obedience, and self-sacrifice, should be inculcated by word and example. With this end in view he compelled the Superiors to give up all personal property, and once more the old rule of having all in common was rigorously enforced. He met with some opposition, a few malcontents refusing to submit to his authority, even threatening and insulting him. Charles, however, treated them with such kindness and forbearance, displaying at the same time great patience and discretion, as well as inflexible determination to carry his point, that the friars repented of their insolence and insubordination and accepted his decrees.

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## The Humble Ones

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He convoked a conference of all the members in order to elect a Father-General, and he induced the friars to renew their vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience; once more the old spirit of evangelical poverty took possession of the sons of St. Francis, the ancient fervour was restored, and the penitent and reunited monks with renewed ardour returned to the original rules of their seraphic founder.

Thus did Charles Borromeo by tact and firmness save from threatened destruction one of the most glorious Orders of the Church, restoring to it by salutary and necessary reform its pristine splendour.



## CHAPTER XIV

### *THE FAMINE OF MILAN—THE BATTLE OF LEPANTO*

"CHARITY must be boundless, so also must almsgiving," Charles Borromeo said on several occasions, and he proved that he was not one of those who *say*, but *do not* ; rather, his deeds outran his words, as he showed when, in 1570, a terrible famine ravaged Milan.

His charity and almsgiving were indeed boundless. For more than three months he fed nearly four thousand people at his own expense, until he had not a penny left, and had to implore the well-off members of his flock to come to the aid of the starving poor. They did so with generous munificence, and their charity was rewarded ; the pressing dangers passed happily away, and Lombardy was saved from the devastating effects caused not only by the scarcity of food, but the greater danger that arose from the severe cold and from the after-effects of unprecedented snowstorms. The snow lay in places eight feet deep, and the imminent peril was that, when it melted, the rush of water would carry away entire villages and destroy the grain that had been sown.

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## The Famine of Milan

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In this extremity Charles had recourse to prayer and fasting, exhorting his flock to unite with him in supplication to Almighty God. Their prayers were heard : a balmy wind from the south slowly and gently melted the snow ; not only was no harm done, but never had the Milanese gathered in so plentiful and rich a harvest as in the succeeding autumn. Charles recommended the farmers to cultivate Indian corn, as it was likely to be of great use in case of another famine. The grateful Milanese called it *Carlone*, in compliment to their generous and prudent Archbishop, and in Lombardy it is called by that name at the present day. Charles resumed his pastoral visits, but with difficulty, for his superb constitution was at last giving way. He had overtaxed his strength for years, but he would not rest, and early in 1571 he once more set out to visit the Catholic cantons of Switzerland. He was, as we have seen, protector of these cantons, and had previously visited them at considerable risk ; for he had to travel through wild and desolate districts, amongst mountaineers who were barely civilized. Once, when riding across the mountains, his path lay along a narrow ledge, with a deep ravine on one side and a perpendicular wall on the other. His mule slipped, and fell upon him. His companions thought he was disabled or dead, but he was quite unhurt. On another occasion, on the borders of the Valtelline, he had to cross a swollen torrent. A peasant offered to carry him over, but in mid-stream let him fall, and then

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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ran off, leaving the Cardinal in his long robes struggling in the midst of a deep and dangerous mountain torrent. Once again his life was miraculously preserved. He had to walk a couple of miles before he met anyone, and at last, when he succeeded in getting shelter, his first care was to order a search to be made for the man who had so basely left him to drown. No sooner was this individual brought to him, than he heaped coals of fire upon his head, giving him money, and treating him with the greatest kindness and consideration. When thus travelling through his diocese, he always stopped at the priest's house. In some of the more remote hamlets, that was often a miserable cottage, with accommodation for only one person. The Cardinal invariably slept on a table, giving the only available bed to his companion, and he partook, as a rule, of merely a little milk and chestnuts in order that this companion and the priest might enjoy a more plentiful meal. Yet in the remotest districts he insisted that the outward ceremonial should be strictly observed. He always had the episcopal cross solemnly borne before him when he entered a church to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice, and he invariably wore the mitre and other insignia of his high position.

His great happiness was to give Holy Communion himself, for he had a very special devotion to the Blessed Eucharist. He was surprised and horrified to find it treated with carelessness and neglect in many of the remote parishes, where

In an incredibly short time he changed this sad state of affairs. He impressed upon his priests the absolute necessity of leading good and virtuous lives, of caring for their people and for their churches, and strictly forbade them to allow parents and guardians to send their little ones to heretical schools. He also insisted on the banishment of heretics from the Catholic cantons, telling the pastors and the civil authorities that they on no pretext should allow a heretic into their parishes. He endeavoured to arrest the progress of heresy, by sending holy and learned priests to these mountainous regions, and for this purpose he founded the Swiss College at Milan : for throughout Switzerland the authorities only allowed ecclesiastics of their own nationality to officiate, or even to enter their country ; consequently it was absolutely necessary that these men should be well trained.

In the Swiss College they received this training, and in due time went back to their own country, ready and willing to devote their talents and their lives to the instruction and edification of their parishioners.

In 1571, after a short stay in Switzerland, Charles was compelled through ill health to return to Milan, and soon had to go to Varallo for a change of air.

as I had an attack of malignancy little better, but every three days I have a new paroxysm; already I have suffered from nine of these violent attacks. I left Milan a few days ago, hoping a change would improve my health, so I came to this remote part of my diocese. It is surrounded by hills, and the air is splendidly invigorating. I have been now for six days taking a rest at Varallo.

“The mysteries of our redemption are represented in several little chapels here, and it has been a great source of interest to me to meditate on them; doing so has much refreshed me.”

After a short stay at this mountain village, though still very feeble, he endeavoured to resume his pastoral visitations. At Massila he heard of the sudden death of the Duke d’Albuquerque. The sad news grieved him deeply, for he liked and esteemed the Governor, notwithstanding the slight interruption of their friendly intercourse at the time of the trouble with the Canons of Santa Maria della Scala, and he hastened back to Milan to perform the last rites of the Church for the deceased, and to console the sorrowing widow and orphans.

During this eventful year all Christendom had watched with wild excitement, not unmingled with terror, the conflict between the Venetians and the

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## The Battle of Lepanto

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Turks. In the previous year the latter had invaded and conquered Cyprus, and had treated their unfortunate captives with revolting cruelty. When St. Pius V. heard of their atrocious deeds, he wept bitter tears, and after long hours spent in prayer and penance he redoubled his efforts to persuade the Christian Princes to come to the aid of the Venetian Republic in their war against the infidel.

He succeeded. Under the command of Don John of Austria, the allied fleets of Spain, Genoa, the Holy See, and Venice, commanded respectively by Sebastiano Venier of Genoa, Andrea Doria of Venice, and the Roman Prince Marc Antonio Colonna, won the famous Battle of Lepanto on October 7, 1571, the Feast of the Holy Rosary. It was one of the most decisive victories of the world, for it checked for ever the Mohammedan power in the Gulf of Corinth.

We can fancy how rejoiced Charles was when he heard the glad tidings. Not only, like all the rest of Christendom, did his soul overflow with thanksgiving and gratitude to Almighty God for this signal success of the allied fleets, but, naturally, his heart was stirred in quite a special way with joyous pride in the triumphal return to the Eternal City of the conqueror Marc Antonio Colonna, the father-in-law of his dearest sister Anna.

He was even more pleased when he learned of the humble and modest demeanour of this truly



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## St. Charles Borromeo

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noble and gallant hero while his praises were proclaimed in the Church of Ara Cœli. In his exaltation he wished all Christendom to unite in canticles of praise and gratitude to the Most High. He wrote to Monsignor Carniglia, who was at that time his agent in Rome, on October 24, 1571 :

“ On the occasion of this great victory, granted to us by the grace of God, I cannot help letting you know how great is our hope and our desire that His Holiness will proclaim a jubilee, in order that the faithful may unite in thanksgiving to God for so glorious a victory.”

## CHAPTER XV

### *DEATH OF ST. PIUS V.—ELECTION OF GREGORY XIII.*

CHARLES was still in an extremely weak state when the mournful tidings reached him of the death of the Sovereign Pontiff. The pontificate of Pius V. had lasted for six years, and on May 1, 1572, he passed away to his reward.

On hearing the news, the Archbishop went at once to the Duomo, to offer up a Requiem Mass for the repose of the soul of the venerable Pope, and to exhort the people to join with him in prayer to God to direct the Sacred College in their choice of a successor; but when he spoke of the heroic virtues and noble qualities of St. Pius, tears choked him, and he sobbed aloud, so dear to his heart was the memory of that grand and courageous Pope.

In spite of the advice of his physicians, he set out for Rome to take part in the coming election. They, however, insisted on sending with him a mule laden with various medicines and remedies; but near Bologna the mule fell into the river, the bottles got broken, and the physic flowed away into the stream. This misadventure greatly amused

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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Charles. He remarked, with a laugh: "It is a good sign, and shows that I need no longer use these remedies."

As a matter of fact, he arrived in Rome in the best of health. The Cardinals met in conclave on May 12, 1572, and on the following day Cardinal Ugo Boncompagni of Bologna was unanimously elected. He took the name of Gregory XIII. He and Charles were old friends, for he had been one of the most brilliant Academicians at the Vatican Nights, and had afterwards distinguished himself during the last sessions of the Council of Trent, having been sent there by Pius IV. to wind it up.

Charles wished to return at once to his diocese, but the new Pope insisted that he should spend a few months in Rome. His health once more gave way, and the Pope persuaded him, though with difficulty, to consult some of the leading physicians; but they did not agree. Some of them said it was essential he should go through the cure at the baths of Lucca; others said that treatment would kill him. In this dilemma Charles took the law into his own hands, and, "having delivered himself from the cruel bondage of the doctors," resumed what to most of us would seem as severe a cure—namely, rigid fasting and abstinence and vigorous discipline. Under this strenuous régime he gained strength every day, and afterwards he frequently told his friends that, "when the doctors had exhausted all their remedies

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## Death of St. Pius V.

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in endeavouring to cure me, I gave them all up completely, and cured myself by fasting and abstinence, that in a short time I was quite well."

Thus, abstinence was called by everyone "Cardinal Borromeo's cure."

During his stay in Rome, he persuaded Gregory XIII. to allow him to resign his offices of Archpriest of Santa Maria Maggiore, of Grand Penitentiary and Protector of the Franciscans and Carmelites. St. Pius V. had always resolutely refused to permit him to give up these appointments, and Charles rejoiced exceedingly that at last it was evidently the will of God that he should be quite free to devote himself absolutely to the care of his diocese. He returned to Milan by Loreto, arriving in that blessed spot on the Eve of All Saints. He spent the night in prayer in the small and humble room in which the Archangel Gabriel announced to the Blessed Virgin Mary: "Blessed art thou amongst women."

The following morning Charles had the happiness of offering up there the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass; and his mind and body both strengthened and refreshed by this flying visit to his favourite shrine, he set out for Milan, to arrive there in time for Advent, which, according to the Ambrosian Calendar, begins on the first Sunday after the feast of St. Martin.

He arrived at Milan on November 12, and at once wrote to the Pope, formally resigning all the dignities and appointments his uncle, Pius IV.,

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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had conferred upon him. He was Protector of Germany and of Portugal, and therefore wrote to the Emperor and to the King, telling them that he had placed his resignation in the hands of the Sovereign Pontiff.

He had for some time hesitated about the disposal of the Abbey of San Gratiano e San Felino at Arona. It was, as we have seen, a sort of "family living," but it was not because he knew he would incur his relatives' anger by renouncing it that he delayed. It was because he was undecided on whom to confer it. He finally resolved to give it to the Jesuits, to found a novitiate in connection with the College of the Brera, which Gregory XIII. had allowed him to give them.

Having thus successfully denuded himself of all the honours and emoluments that St. Pius V. had insisted on his retaining, saving only his dearly loved See, he was free to devote himself unservedly to the holding of his third Provincial Council.

## CHAPTER XVI

### *CHURCH VERSUS STATE*

THEIR Archbishop had been but a short time amongst them, when the Milanese noticed that he had grown holier and more austere. His prayers were more frequent and more prolonged, his penances more severe. Indeed, his historians remark that each time that he returned from the Eternal City he was more saintly, more seraphic. It seemed as though from that blessed place, that is hallowed by the blood of numberless martyrs, and sanctified by the purity and celestial ardour of so many saints, Charles Borromeo gained fresh fervour and strength to tread the difficult and thorny path that grew daily more difficult and more thorny.

“To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite ;  
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night ;  
To defy Power which seems omnipotent ;  
To love and bear ; to hope till Hope creates  
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates ;  
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent :  
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be  
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free,  
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.”

Charles was the Christian Titan who was to war, not only with the Powers of Darkness, but with



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## St. Charles Borromeo

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the Temporal Power given to despotic and ignorant men. He was to wage a deathless war against the pride and pomp of the world, in behalf of the rights of Holy Church. He had already proved himself her unconquerable champion; once more he was about to enter the lists and combat successive tyrannical Governors.

Charles had scarcely arrived in Milan, when the storm once more broke forth. On the death of the Duke d'Albuquerque, Philip II. had appointed Don Alvarez de Sandes as Governor *pro tem*. He was an arrogant and stupid man, and his foolish head was quite turned by the grandeur of his exalted position.

“Dressed in a little brief authority,  
Most ignorant of what he's most assured—  
His glassy essence—like an angry ape,  
Plays such fantastic tricks before high Heaven  
As make the angels weep.”

Don Alvarez was determined that he, not the Archbishop, should indeed and in truth, as well as in name, be the true ruler of Milan. This pestilent priest was having things too much his own way; he was changing the lives of the citizens, he was turning them into good practical Catholics, who led peaceful and holy existences, frequenting the Sacraments, attending daily Mass, and giving liberal alms; in fact, they were no longer the roistering, jovial, unregenerate people of former days. This sort of thing must not be allowed to go on; the Milanese must cease to be

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## Church versus State

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saints, and become sinners again. With this object in view, the new Governor announced that there would be a bull-fight and other games in the Piazza del Duomo during the carnival. These frolics would allure the people, and, instead of going inside the Duomo to pray, they would remain outside to play.

When Charles heard of it, he sternly forbade the games to be held there, under pain of excommunication. Don Alvarez was compelled to yield, but he held the spectacle in front of the Castello ; and he induced many of the nobles to give balls and masquerades during Lent, although Charles had forbidden that such entertainments should be held during the penitential season. He even started various mummeries on holidays of obligation, and at the very hour of Divine service. Death cut him short in the midst of his nefarious designs, and he passed away unregretted, and as far as we can gather unrepentant.

The King appointed Don Castiglia Luis de Requesens Governor of Milan. He was an old friend of Charles Borromeo's, for he had been Spanish Ambassador at the Vatican during the pontificate of Pius IV. Everyone rejoiced when they heard of his appointment, and on his arrival he was cordially welcomed by priests and people ; for all thought that strife and contention were over and done with, and that in future peace, love, and harmony, would reign between the civil and ecclesiastical authorities. They were the more

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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grievously disappointed when they discovered that their hopes were but fond delusions, and that Don Luis was a far more dangerous and virulent opponent to the rights of Holy Church than either of his predecessors.

Don Luis started his campaign against the ecclesiastical authority by the case of Resta, a Milanese who had a lawsuit with the nuns of Galarete which had been for some time dragging its slow course through the Ecclesiastical Court, when at their Governor's instigation the ministers thought fit to interfere and to defend Resta. This was a violation of the canonical law, and fell under the censure of the Bull *Cæna Domini*.

The Archbishop at once referred the case to Rome, writing to the Holy Father that he was willing to abide by his decision in that and in all things.

Requesens did not let the grass grow under his feet, for he produced a letter written some time previously by Philip II., and addressed to the late Duke d'Albuquerque. There was so much in it prejudicial to the ecclesiastical authority that the Duke had feared to publish it. Don Luis, having found it, threatened the Archbishop, but in a half-playful manner, that he was about to make its contents known. Charles thought he but jested, and paid no attention to him—in fact, started on his pastoral visitations.

He had scarcely left Milan, when Don Luis placarded copies of the document all over the

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## Church versus State

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city. Charles returned in haste, and in his turn threatened to excommunicate the Governor if he did not at once give a full, true, and particular account of the letter, and explain that it bore an old date, and that the King had absolutely changed his mind on the subject.

Don Luis refused; entreaties, arguments, threats, failed to move him. Finally, Charles felt compelled, though sorely against his inclination, to excommunicate the Governor, the Chancellor, and their adherents.

The Governor retorted by a long manifesto "against the aggressions of Cardinal Borromeo," and a terrible struggle ensued. Shortly afterwards Don Luis posted a vile attack on the Cardinal on the doors of several of the churches. This libel declared that "Cardinal Borromeo was an ignorant and degraded man, incapable of fulfilling the duties of his exalted position, and that he was the originator of all the troubles and dissensions between Church and State, that he was a traitor to his King and his country," and so on.

Charles sent a copy of this pasquinade, as it was called, to Monsignor Castelli, writing: "I enclose the Pasquin: what do you say to it? You see they have given me a pasquinade for my excommunication."

Don Luis forbade the meetings of the various confraternities unless a magistrate were present; he put an armed guard round the archiepiscopal palace; he watched and spied on every member

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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of the Cardinal's household ; and he did all in his power to prevent the faithful from attending Divine service.

He wished to make Charles a prisoner, and when he failed he forbade anyone to accompany him or to speak to him ; but Charles passed in and out with his usual quiet dignity, going and coming unconcernedly, and paying no attention to the soldiers who were ordered to prevent his people from approaching him. As a matter of fact, these rough men were so touched by his calm serenity and dauntless courage that they one and all knelt before him as he passed—the cavaliers dismounting in order to do so—imploing him to bless them.

In a spirit of contemptible meanness, the Governor actually ordered the ancient fortress of the Borromei—the Rocca d' Arona—to be seized. He sent Count Angosciola, who was in command of the troops at Como, to take possession of the Rocca in the King's name, and to take the command from Giulio Beolchi, who held it for the Cardinal ; for though, as we have seen, Charles had bestowed it on his uncle, Count Francis Borromeo, he was still looked on by everyone as the head of the house : so when Don Luis committed this last aggression, it was to Charles that Captain Giulio Beolchi appealed, asking for instructions, for he did not intend to surrender the fortress to Count Angosciola unless ordered to do so by Charles Borromeo.

The Archbishop commanded him to give it up

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## Church versus State

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without delay, and sent Count Francis Borromeo to Don Luis to tell him that it had been quite unnecessary for him to send armed troops to take the Rocca; for it and everything else—lands, castles, fiefs, all the possessions of the Borromei—belonged to the King, and Charles and his uncles were willing to surrender them all to prove their loyalty and fidelity to the Crown.

Charles afterwards said to the Governor: "It was useless for you to send an armed force; you have but to say the word, and the Rocca d' Arona, the Castello d' Angera, and all our other fiefs, will be immediately given to the King to do what he pleases with them. But in whatever concerns the Church and the Divine service I will make no concessions."



## CHAPTER XVII

### "*ANOTHER AMBROSE*"

"I HAVE found in the city of Milan another Ambrose," Don Luis wrote to Philip II.

We wonder, did the arrogant Governor think that he was another Theodosius, and did he hope he would be more successful in the struggle for supremacy than the Roman Emperor?

It would undoubtedly have been a splendid triumph to have compelled the successor and the imitator of St. Ambrose to yield.

But Charles Borromeo was as inflexibly resolved to safeguard the rights of the ecclesiastical over the civil power—but not in temporal things—as had been the glorious Champion of the Church in olden times. His strength of character was as great, his mind as powerful, his soul as pure and noble, and certainly his courage was as dauntless. He, too, having bid defiance to the pomp and pride of State, would if necessary, in vindication of the supreme authority of Rome, have compelled the Governor—nay, the King himself—to kneel before the porch of the Duomo, barring the entrance to the sanctuary until fitting penance had been performed.

Fortunately, this last drastic measure was

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## “ Another Ambrose ”

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unnecessary ; for although Don Luis continued to persecute the Archbishop, annoying and thwarting him on every occasion, even meddling with his correspondence, and confiscating the explanatory letters Charles wrote to the Pope and the King, yet in the end the good cause triumphed. The following extract from a letter Charles wrote at this time to Monsignor Castelli is very characteristic of our saint, and gives us a fair idea of the unruffled calmness of his soul during this long and bitter strife :

“ MILAN, *September 3, 1573.*

“ It grieves me to see that you are all very excited in Rome over the Rocca d' Arona. I did not expect, and certainly do not wish, you to take it to heart. I only mentioned it in order that you should understand how strenuously, not to say vindictively, they act here, and not in order that the Holy Father should interfere on my behalf in this matter of the Rocca. No ; I hope he will not in any way endeavour either here or in Spain to compel them to give it back to me. I consider that his intervention would be prejudicial to the interests of the Church, for they might imagine that for the sake of our temporal interests we should be willing to be silent on ecclesiastical matters. At any rate—perhaps it is pride, I know not—it is my opinion that it would be low and mean even to think of one's own private grievances, much more to say a word to remedy them when such high and sacred causes are at stake. No ;

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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even if they take from me, not only Arona, but all the rest of the family estates, and deprive me as well of the revenues of the See of Milan, I should not feel inclined to use spiritual arms against them, or even to say a word of complaint, unless His Holiness expressly commanded me to do so, lest my example might make other prelates timid in the defence of their rights.

“I have calculated all necessary expenses, and I have quite enough to live upon, so you need not be anxious about me.”

In the meantime the Governor had both written and sent envoys to Rome and Spain, but at both Courts Charles had clever and powerful friends, who were able to unravel the tangled skein of the Governor's purposely involved complaints.

Indeed, the senator sent by him to the Pope was seriously injured by a kick from a horse while on his journey; however, he was able to reach Rome, but no sooner did he attempt to plead the cause of the Governor and Senate of Milan before the Holy Father, than he was seized by a fit of apoplexy, and died shortly afterwards, unable to utter a word.

The Papal Nuncio at the Court of Madrid was at this period Monsignor Ormanetto, Bishop of Padua, and former Vicar-General of Milan. He was a devoted adherent and loyal friend of the persecuted Archbishop. After a time Philip yielded to the representations and arguments of this learned and

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## “ Another Ambrose ”

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holy man, and agreed to remove the truculent Governor from Milan and appoint him to command the troops in Flanders.

Everyone hoped that when Don Luis de Requesens left Italy peace would be restored, and Church and State would no longer be at loggerheads.

Unfortunately, an episode occurred that postponed for a time this happy result.

The fact that he was under the censure of the Church caused Don Luis poignant suffering, not only because his conscience condemned him, but also because his friends and acquaintances stood afar off, and looked on him askance. He was not sufficiently manly and straightforward to go direct to the Archbishop, confess his fault and his sorrow, and ask forgiveness. Instead he endeavoured in a roundabout and underhand way to become reconciled with Holy Church. He persuaded friends of his in Rome to ask the Pope to remove the sentence of excommunication. They told Gregory XIII. that Don Luis de Requesens had been appointed Commander of the Spanish Army in Flanders. This was true, but they also told him that Don Luis had left Milan, and was on his way to the Low Countries. This was not true, for the Governor was still in Milan. Acting on the belief that both these statements were absolutely correct, the Holy Father granted a brief conferring faculties on any priest, to whom Don Luis made his confession, to give him absolution.

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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Accordingly, Don Luis went to the monastery of the Récollets, and confessed to Father Leonard, one of the monks of the Order. This priest, having read the brief and acting in good faith, gave him absolution, and the following morning Requesens attended Holy Mass at the monastery and received Holy Communion. Afterwards he attended the Holy Sacrifice at several churches, but when Charles heard of it he was deeply moved, for he did not know that the Pope had granted a brief and that the Governor had received absolution. He therefore prohibited all the priests in the diocese from offering up the Holy Sacrifice when Requesens was present.

Naturally, there was considerable agitation over all this; the Governor was annoyed, the people were bewildered, and it seemed as though a fresh and more strenuous conflict was about to commence.

Charles wrote at once to Rome, and when the Pope heard the true version of the case, and learned that Don Luis, instead of being on his way to Flanders, was still in Milan, he was justly angered with the men who had so grossly deceived him. He ordered Requesens to give full satisfaction to the Archbishop according to the canonical law. Don Luis complied, and frankly asked pardon, probably because he was weary of strife and wished to be at peace with God and man before undertaking his new duties. In his inmost heart he appears to have always cherished

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## “ Another Ambrose ”

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a great respect and sincere admiration for Charles. Two years later, when Don Luis lay on his death-bed mentally worn out by the strain and anxiety caused by the frequent defeats of his troops, and physically wasted by disease, he wrote to the Archbishop again, asking him to forgive the past, and begging the saint to pray for him. Needless to say that on both occasions Charles generously complied with his request.

The Chancellor also rested under the ban of excommunication. He not only did not repent, but laughed and jested at the anathemas hurled at him. His pleasantries, however, soon ceased, for a strange melancholy took possession of him. The doctors tried every known remedy, but in vain. Nothing could rouse him from the state of hopeless despair into which he had fallen, and it was only after six years of terrible mental trouble, coupled with extreme bodily weakness, that, feeling he was about to pass away unabsolved, he sent for Charles and implored his pardon.

The Archbishop related this incident in the following letter to his friend Monsignor Speciano :

“ MILAN, *April* 16, 1579.

“ I wish you were here, so that you could see for yourself how false are the reports that have been circulated about me. They say that the King's Ministers detest me. Well, to-day the Lord Chancellor, who is at the point of death, sent for me, confessed to me, and received from



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## St. Charles Borromeo

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my hands the Bread of Life. Afterwards he asked my advice about making his will, and later on signed it in my presence, and he conferred with me for a long time on his most private affairs."

Charles wrote to Castelli :

"I really do not know whether I have more faith than you, but I always feel that one must place all one's confidence in God. I think—nay, I am certain—that the less help and support we receive from men, the more certain we are of heavenly consolation and assistance. God always takes greatest care of those who are forsaken by men, and He manifests to them on these occasions in fullest measure His infinite goodness and mercy."

## CHAPTER XVIII

### *THE MOST CHRISTIAN KING—THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE*

ON August 10, 1574, Charles Borromeo set out to meet the young King of France at Monza. The ill-fated, mad, misguided Charles IX. had passed away—he whose memory will ever inspire loathing mingled with pity, whose brief reign is stained blood-red with the unspeakable, unthinkable horrors of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew.

He was succeeded by his brother Henry, then King of Poland, but who, on hearing of his accession to the throne of France, fearing his subjects would endeavour to detain him, fled from his small kingdom and passed through Italy on his way to Paris. Truth to tell, he dallied somewhat in the fair cities of the South, particularly in Venice, where he was right royally entertained; but he was at last hastening, and, as he had not time to visit Milan, the Archbishop thought it advisable to go to Monza to meet him. The Pope was most desirous that these two—the saintly ascetic and the frivolous Prince—should hold converse together; for he considered that the strong personality of Charles would exercise a

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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beneficial influence on the character of the giddy young King. He hoped the Archbishop would succeed in instilling into the mind of the monarch his own deep religious convictions, his high-souled ideals and noble aims, and that the new King would lead his people upward, onward, rescuing some from the spiritual lethargy into which they had fallen, saving others from the evils of heresy, and would himself, the eldest son of the Church, restore to France her ancient splendour, making her in truth and in deed, as in word and in name, the eldest daughter of the Church.

Charles has described his meeting with Henry III. in a very clear and decidedly characteristic letter. It is too long to translate in full, but the following extracts will give an idea of the thoughts and emotions he experienced on this memorable occasion.

“You ask me to give you a full and particular account of my interviews with the King of France, and the impressions I received during them, telling me it is the express order of His Holiness that I should do so. It is not easy to form a correct judgment when intercourse has been brief and superficial. I met Henry twice, and for a very short time, and we were only able to converse on ordinary topics. Nevertheless, I will do my best to obey the Pope’s command: I visited His Majesty with the intention of doing and saying what the Holy Ghost would inspire me to do and say in order to promote the greater honour and

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## The Most Christian King

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glory of God, and to forward the interests of Christianity. This is what passed between us: I expressed to him as clearly and succinctly as I could the hope we felt that his future career would be in accordance with the noble actions of his past life, and that he would act energetically and vigorously against the enemies of God and of the Catholic religion.

“He cordially agreed with my views, and promised to do his utmost to continue to merit our good opinion. He said, as he was ‘the Most Christian King,’ he was consequently the first King of Christendom, and as such he considered it his duty to do all in his power to promote the greater honour of God, particularly in his own kingdom.

“I was much edified by the gentle demeanour and grave courtesy of the Prince. He is modest, pious, and sedate, and he has given undeniable proofs of possessing a religious disposition; for he has never failed to visit the churches at all the various places where he has broken his journey. I celebrated Holy Mass in his presence, and he assisted with much devotion. He told me that since his childhood he has gone to confession once a month, and attended daily Mass. I sent him a crucifix, with a message that it was under the standard of the Cross he should fight in his dominions against the foes of the true Faith. He was at breakfast when he received it, surrounded by courtiers and attendants. He took

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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the crucifix, kissed it devoutly, and placed it before him on the table, after looking at it with great fervour and piety."

That Charles Borromeo was deceived in the estimate he formed of the King of France is not surprising. They only met twice, and conversed together for but a very short time. In those days Henry III. was young, charming, attractive; he had much natural grace and ability, and it was impossible that even so sagacious and keen a judge of character as the reforming Cardinal could detect the weakness and insincerity hidden behind his frank, genial manner. Henry was devout all his life. Even when sunk to the lowest depths of sloth and degradation; even when, deceiving and deceived, he had worn out the loyalty of his friends and had earned the contempt of his foes, he prayed and fasted, assisted at Holy Mass, and was superstitiously devout. It may not have been his fault that the evil genius of the House of Valois, his treacherous, scheming, pitiless mother, Catherine de' Medici, so dominated his weaker nature that he yielded to her his manhood and his strength, sacrificing at her bidding the noble ideals, the lofty aims, that had filled his soul when he and Charles Borromeo conversed together in the quaint old town of Monza.

During his short sojourn Charles performed there a memorable and well-authenticated miracle. A girl lived there who was, in the opinion of all who knew her, possessed by the

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## The Christian Doctrine

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devil. She was generally in a state of the deepest melancholy, but when she assisted at Holy Mass or was in presence of the Blessed Sacrament she was seized by the most horrible convulsions, foaming at the mouth and showing all the signs of demoniacal possession.

The unfortunate girl herself was quite aware of her dreadful condition. Her only hope was in the mercy of God. Accordingly, when she saw the saintly servant of the Most High passing her house, she rushed out, threw herself at his feet, and implored him to bless her. Charles gave her his benediction with great fervour, and even as he did so the evil spirit fled, and she was completely cured.

On his return to Milan, Charles devoted much time to the perfecting of the Confraternity of the Christian Doctrine. This pious and most useful association had been established some years previously in Milan by a priest of the Diocese of Como, named Castellino di Castello, a priest so innocent and childlike that he was called the Father of Purity.

It was not surprising that one whose own character was sweet and simple, like that of a little child, should have formed a Congregation whose chief object was the education of the little ones. It was composed mainly of laymen, and it was part of their rule to gather little children together, to allure them from the frivolous, often dangerous, amusements of the streets, and to



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## St. Charles Borromeo

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bring them to the schools and colleges, where they were instructed in the truths of our holy religion.

These zealous and generous men were called Fishers, and wore the badge of a fisherman.

The children, thus rescued from the evils of the streets, became in their turn little apostles, inducing their parents to frequent the Sacraments and visit the churches.

Charles, while occupied in caring for the souls of the young Milanese lads, did not neglect to see after the salvation of the girls.

In 1537 Angela de Mericia founded an Order at Brescia called the Virgins of St. Ursula. The principal object of these good nuns was to instruct young girls in the knowledge of Christian doctrine. Later on they opened a convent at Milan, and Charles did all in his power to aid them in their pious work, giving them a definite rule, and helping them to extend their convents by encouraging young girls to enter the Order.

Such was the origin of the now well-known and widespread Order of the Ursulines, and it was St. Charles Borromeo who practically founded it; for he saved it from dying of inanition, and placed it on the highroad to become one of the greatest and most useful Congregations of devout women. It was not, however, until 1618 that it was formerly declared a Religious Order.

Another favourite confraternity of the zealous Archbishop was that known as St. John the

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## The Christian Doctrine

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Beheaded. This had for its object the care of condemned prisoners, and many of the nobility and of the most distinguished citizens were members.

Another Order that looked upon Charles Borromeo as its second founder was that of the Clerks Regular of St. Paul, generally known as Barnabites. Their constitutions required revision, and their General, Dominic Sauli, who had been a student at the University of Padua at the same time as Charles, asked the Archbishop to undertake the task. This he did, and soon many subjects joined the reformed Barnabites, and their monasteries were quickly filled with men of rare talent and piety. Sauli was a most zealous and learned priest, wise and prudent, and gifted with rare penetration. Charles often consulted him on knotty problems, and almost invariably followed his advice.

We can easily imagine the good done in the Diocese of Milan by all these pious confraternities, and we can picture to ourselves the reforming Cardinal passing from one community to another, encouraging, exhorting, inspiring monks and priests, nuns and people, with vigorous life and courageous confidence.

"The zeal of Thy house hath eaten me up" might well be applied to Charles Borromeo, for prayer and fasting, penances and austerities, had worn him to a shadow. It was as though only his soul lived, that he was no longer flesh and

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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blood, but a glorified spirit, so frail was the earthly tenement that held the indomitable soul. Only by a superhuman effort could soul and body still cleave together; and though Charles longed ardently to enter into life everlasting, he knew he had strenuous and difficult work to do before he could lay down the burden of life, so he steeled himself to carry on the numberless labours and good deeds he had put his hand to, going through the narrow streets and open squares of the fair City of the Plains like a seraph from Paradise. Following the example of his Divine Master, he went about doing good.

“And He that sent Me is with Me, and He hath not left Me alone; for I do always the things that please Him” (St. John viii. 29).

## CHAPTER XIX

### *THE JUBILEE OF 1575*

THE year of our Lord 1575 was a holy year in Rome, and, indeed, throughout Christendom, for it was the year of Jubilee. Every twenty-five years, as we all know, the Sovereign Pontiff grants special favours and indulgences, particularly to those who visit the Eternal City; and Gregory XIII. was resolved to carry out with extraordinary solemnity and great magnificence the glorious and holy event that occurred during his pontificate. Consequently he summoned all the Cardinals to Rome, in order not only that they should be present at the opening ceremony, but that they should aid him with their counsels how best to minister to the wants of Holy Church, as well as to strengthen the bonds of Christian union.

Charles Borromeo had not intended going to Rome until the autumn, and when he received the summons from the Pope he was somewhat disturbed. All his arrangements for the year were made, and, as we know, he was most methodical, far-seeing, and accurate. The alteration of his plans caused him considerable inconvenience, not unmixed with a certain amount of annoyance.

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He wrote to Monsignor Carniglia :

"I do not see that my presence in Rome will do any good, either as Cardinal or as Bishop, in helping to make arrangements for the Holy Year. . . . But since it is the wish of His Holiness that I go to Rome early in the year, and return to my diocese before Lent, I submit my judgment to his, and am ready to obey him in all things. . . . Yet I will not undertake the journey without a written order from the Pope . . . otherwise I should not be acting in accordance with the decrees of the Council of Trent."

Charles was almost painfully conscientious, and all his life observed to the letter, as well as in the spirit, the smallest ordinance of the Church. Thus, we find him whenever outside his own dominion invariably using the Roman Rite, though towards the end of his life he asked and obtained permission always to use the Ambrosian.

Before starting he was tremendously busy, and worked with such untiring energy that he almost died of starvation, for he would not give even a few minutes to refreshment, much less to rest. He neither slept nor ate, and when his attendants announced that supper was ready, he replied : "It is too soon." Towards midnight, when they again interrupted him to implore him to take a little food, he replied, "It is too late," and went on with his work.

He started on December 8, 1574, in the midst

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## The Jubilee of 1575

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of the severest weather of a particularly severe and inclement winter. He visited many sanctuaries *en route*, spending hours in prayer on Monte Alverno, where the seraphic Francis of Assisi received the Sacred Stigmata.

A wonderful ardour of Divine love filled the soul of Charles while he meditated on the miraculous and stupendous martyrdom that had transformed a mere man like himself into the likeness of the crucified Saviour.

"During the journey," writes Lanfranc Reyna, "Cardinal Borromeo ate only dried raisins, nuts, and bread. We invariably arrived at an inn late at night, and, as we were not expected, no preparations had been made, nothing was ready; often we had no beds to sleep on, and could not get food. As soon as we dismounted we went to the Cardinal's room. We were generally covered with mud and wet to the skin. Of course he was in the same forlorn plight. Nevertheless we all knelt down, finished the Office, recited Litanies, then prayed for some time in silence, and these devotions ended with a discourse from His Eminence. Then we retired to rest, leaving him to pray during the silent hours; but at three in the morning we reassembled in his room, recited the first part of the Office, and afterwards we each and all offered up the Holy Sacrifice. Then we once more resumed our journey in the chill dawn of a cold December morning."

Thirteen days were spent on this toilsome and



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arduous journey. Finally the pilgrims reached the Eternal City, to find it thronged with strangers and pilgrims of all nations.

Muratori relates in an interesting and graphic way the history of the Holy Year. He tells us that more than three hundred thousand persons came from all parts of the world, and that there were generally about a hundred thousand pilgrims in the city every day. They came from Armenia, Arabia, and Syria, clothed in strange raiment, but indeed strangers thronged in from all parts of Europe and Asia.

There were Princes and nobles of high degree, Ernest of Bavaria, Paolo Orsini, Alessandro Farnese, many German Princes, and greatest in our eyes, though perhaps scarce noticed then, Torquato Tasso, the world-famous poet, the brilliant author of "*La Gerusalemme Liberata*," "*La Gerusalemme Conquistata*," and of that romantic poem, "*Rinaldo*"—he whose sad fate it was, many years later, to die ere the dearly-won laurel crown could touch his aching brows, who passed away in the moment of triumph, dying of exhaustion and fatigue on the very morning that was to have witnessed his coronation on the Capitol as poet laureate.

Muratori also tells us that from December 25, 1574, until May, 1575, the *Confraternità dei Pellegrini* gave food and shelter to ninety-six thousand eight hundred and forty-eight pilgrims.

Charles gave twenty-five crowns a month to

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## The Jubilee of 1575

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this confraternity. He also entertained in the palace he had built close to his Cardinal's Church of Santa Prassede a crowd of Milanese. They flocked there in such numbers that Gregory XIII., when giving a private audience to a nobleman of Milan, Count Louis Gallerati, inquired curiously: "How is it that more pilgrims have arrived to-day from Milan than from anywhere else?"

"Holy Father, it is because my fellow-citizens are deeply touched and impressed by their pastor's example."

The Sovereign Pontiff lifted his hands and eyes to heaven, exclaiming: "Where can we find those who will vie with him in sanctity?"

Another contemporary chronicler writes: "The officials of the *Confraternità dei Pellegrini* in the fervour of their charity promised His Holiness that they would lodge and feed six hundred pilgrims every day; but, since the work was of God, the numbers increased so rapidly that soon the six hundred had grown to more than six thousand, so that during the year the confraternity provided food and lodging for one hundred and forty-four thousand two hundred and sixty-three pilgrims, besides caring for twenty-one thousand during sickness and convalescence. They were provided with all things needful to them, some for three days, others for five days, and those who came from beyond the mountains, for ten days. . . . The ceremony observed in this blessed place is as follows: The pilgrims are received into the

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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house on the understanding that on the following day they receive the Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist . . . and must have received a badge from the penitentiaries. . . . When they are admitted, they are served at dinner by illustrious noblemen, and honourable gentlemen of all nations, who wear habits of red sackcloth and aprons. They perform their lowly office with great humility, charity, and obedience, and wait upon the poor with such brotherly love and watchful kindness and diligence that one could fancy each meal was the wedding banquet of a great Prince. . . . Many of these nobles washed the feet of the poor pilgrims, even shedding tears as they did so, at the thought of their own unworthiness to perform an office sanctified by our Divine Redeemer; and the pilgrims in their turn were moved to tears, so touched were they by so great humility and devotion. Many refused to allow distinguished potentates and men of high rank to wash their feet, but were conquered by the gentle persuasion of these exalted personages, who considered it an honour to be of use to Christ's poor. Then when they had washed them and dressed their sores they brought them to the dormitories. . . . The same services were rendered to the women by noble and illustrious ladies. Priests and holy religious were there, who instructed the pilgrims, teaching them how best to prepare to receive the graces of the Jubilee, giving them little books to read, and supplying poor priests with breviaries.

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## The Jubilee of 1575

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. . . . Alms flowed in abundantly, so that nothing was lacking that was necessary. . . .

“On their return the pilgrims were accompanied to the city gates, and sent on their way with all they required for their journey. . . . Many nobles and gentlemen were so touched by the example set them by the *Confraternità dei Pellegrini* that they received pilgrims into their own palaces and houses, ministering to them in like manner. Nor must we omit to relate the wonderful effect produced on twelve heretics, one of them a leader of his sect, who had received hospitality from the *confraternità*; for when they had seen these holy works of charity, they meditated on them to such advantage that they were converted, and, returning to their homes, spread the truth in their own country, saying they had found Rome a holy city, and not at all the Babylon they had been taught to think it.”

## CHAPTER XX

### *"TALES AMBIO DEFENSORES"*

DURING the six weeks Charles Borromeo spent in the Eternal City, the bonds of brotherly love and holy friendship that united him to the gentle Apostle of Rome grew and strengthened. They had loved and respected each other before, but in the Holy Year their mutual affection and admiration so increased, that it might be said of them as of David and Jonathan: "Very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love was wonderful, passing the love of women."

Yet, notwithstanding his affection for the Archbishop, the saintly Oratorian refused to allow his dearest friend to rob him of his two dearly loved sons, Cesare Baronio and Francesco Maria Tarugi.

The Congregation of the Oratory was in splendid working order at Santa Maria in Vallicella; as it was not yet canonically raised into an Order, it had not a fixed Rule. In the following July, Gregory XIII. published a Bull formally founding the Congregation of the Oratory; it contains the following passage relative to the statutes of the Order: "Let them reform at their discretion the statutes and rules already made; let

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## “Tales Ambio Defensores”

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them limit, or modify, or add to them as may appear to them expedient. And such statutes or rules thus changed or reformed or added to shall be freely approved by the Apostolic See, and inviolably observed by all members of the said Congregation.”

We have already seen that it was one of the dreams of Charles to found at Milan a similar Congregation of secular priests. In 1570 Philip himself had longed to go to Milan, but the Pope would not allow him to leave Rome; now, in 1575, Philip would not allow his favourite disciples to quit the Eternal City. Charles besought him almost with tears to give him Baronio and Tarugi, but the sweet and gentle Philip could be just as inflexible on occasions as his sterner friend. He wrote a piquant and intensely characteristic letter to Charles; it shows so clearly the widely different temperaments of these two devoted friends that I cannot resist giving extracts from it.

“It caused me intense pain,” the Oratorian writes to the Archbishop, “to have been unable to wish you farewell. God alone knows how dearly I love you! It grieves me to the heart to be compelled to refuse your request; I cannot bear the idea of not giving you the priests you ask me for, and yet I cannot comply with your request without injuring our Congregation. I wish to Heaven it was only a question of my own convenience. . . . You tell me that I am



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self-indulgent in this respect, but I am certain, and by your leave I say it to you frankly, that you yourself are far more self-indulgent in such matters; many accuse you of it, and even of robbery! The Bishops of Rimini, Vercelli, and many other places, say so. When you meet a capable man, you immediately endeavour to allure him to Milan; you are a most daring and audacious robber of holy and learned souls, and, as the saying is, 'You despoil one altar to adorn another.' *Amicus Socrates, amicus Plato, magis amica veritas.* I beg of you to forgive me such plain speaking."

But when Fathers Alessandro Fedeli and Pompeo Pateri, the two priests whom Philip finally sent to Milan, arrived in that city, Charles was compelled to show himself as inflexible as Philip had been. One of them had not brought with him the usual *celebret*; consequently, when the matter was referred to him, the Archbishop would not give him permission to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice, for he invariably adhered to the letter as well as the spirit of the Council of Trent, and to have dispensed with the *celebret* would have been contrary to the letter of the decree of the Sacred Council.

Before leaving Rome, the once haughty son of the Borromei showed that he had become in very truth a follower of Him who was meek and humble of heart, for he implored the Holy Father to allow him to efface from his memory, and from the minds of men, even his own name—that

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## “Tales Ambio Defensores”

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historic name he had gloried in, and which he had looked upon as a noble and sacred heritage. He entreated to be allowed to sign himself simply Cardinal of Santa Prassede, and to use as seal, instead of the armorial device of his house, one with the figure of St. Ambrose between the martyrs SS. Gervasius and Protasius, with the motto *Tales ambio defensores*.

From this date Charles always signed himself Cardinal di Santa Prassede. His Vicar-General, Fontano, who was later on appointed Bishop of Ferrara, asked him why he had changed his signature and his seal.

He replied: “For a long time I wished to renounce the name of my family, for it is my opinion that Bishops after their consecration should for ever give up their homes, their titles, and their own people; but I would not do so without the Pope’s permission.”

While in Rome it pleased our Lord to show in a marked way the love He felt for His chosen servant; for as He sent forth His disciples to perform miracles, saying unto them, “Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils: freely have you received, freely give,” so He has throughout the centuries given supernatural power to the saints of His Church to cure the sick, to raise the dead, to manifest by deeds as well as words the wonderful works of God.

It was Cesare Baronio who on this occasion

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was the instrument that helped to show forth the sanctity of the austere Cardinal, and the power given to him by God.

Cesare contrived to get possession of the sandals worn by Charles on his visits to the churches, for he went barefooted save for them. In Rome, as but a short time previously at Monza, was a young girl who was possessed by Satan. Baronio succeeded in getting her brought to the Church of the Vallicella, and there, in the presence of St. Philip Neri, she was touched with the sandal. She immediately shrieked aloud in agony; her howls and shouts were appalling, but at last the devil left her, and she was quite cured.

On his way back to Milan, Charles broke his journey at Guastalla, in order to visit his sister Camilla and her husband, Cesare di Gonzaga. He found the Prince dangerously ill, and so delirious that he was incapable of receiving the last Sacraments. Charles caused the Blessed Sacrament to be exposed and prayers to be offered up; he himself spent the long night begging God to have mercy on the dying man, and restore him to consciousness before the end came. God hearkened to the supplication of His faithful servant, for Gonzaga recovered his senses, confessed, received Extreme Unction and the Holy Viaticum, and died at peace with God and man.

Charles remained for a short time, partly in order to be present at the funeral, but principally to comfort his sister in her overwhelming sorrow.

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## “Tales Ambio Defensores”

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When all was well with his sisters and his relatives Charles often treated them with apparent indifference, taking to heart and putting in practice those words of our Divine Redeemer: “If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.” When they were in trouble he was as a ministering angel unto them, kind, self-sacrificing, generous.

He had passed his favourite sister, Anna Colonna, without even a sign of recognition, when she, with her husband, Don Fabrizio, and her father-in-law, one of the conquerors of Lepanto, the renowned Prince Marc Antonio Colonna, had got out of their carriage in order to speak to him when he was on his way to the Church of St. Paul; but when Camilla di Gonzaga was in sore need of sympathy and consolation, he gave her ungrudgingly precious hours and days, though weighty matters necessitated his return to his diocese.

Some days after his return to Milan, he wrote the following letter to his sister, Anna Colonna:

“MILAN, *March 4, 1575.*

“Last Thursday, thanks be to God, I arrived in Milan in the best of health, and greatly to the mutual gratification of pastor and of flock. I was detained for two days at Guastalla by the sickness and death of our illustrious Cesare. He gave so many signs of true contrition and of resignation to

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the will of God, that we hope his soul has entered into life everlasting. We must therefore console ourselves for his loss, for it is only for a time. God grant that he may soon enjoy the Beatific Vision! The Princess is well. Don Ferrante has caught the fever, but slightly; probably he will soon recover."

Ferrante was the nephew of the Cardinal, the son and heir of the Gonzagas.

The inevitable result was that, when Charles arrived in Milan, he was so overwhelmed with work that his health almost broke down; but for the indomitable spirit that kept the frail body alive, he would certainly have collapsed completely, but the thought of the glad tidings he brought to his beloved flock prevented his succumbing.

"Hope deferred undoubtedly maketh the heart sick; but hope, the steadfast and certain hope, of a great blessing, not only maketh the heart rejoice, but keepeth the whole body in health."

This hope it was that sustained Charles during the summer heats, and helped him to brave the intense cold of the snow and frosts of the November and December days, until in 1576 he was able publicly to announce to the people that the Holy Father had granted for that year, the Jubilee of the Holy Year, to the City and Diocese of Milan, and also to the seven churches of Milan, the same indulgences granted to the seven churches of Rome.

So great was his zeal and fervour that he suc-

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## “Tales Ambio Defensores”

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ceeded in kindling something of his own zeal and fervour in the hearts of the Milanese. He arranged everything for the fit observance of the Jubilee with his usual extraordinary method. They say that genius is an infinite capacity of taking pains, and if that be true Charles Borromeo was one of the greatest geniuses the world has ever seen ; for throughout his life he showed a marvellous aptitude for detail, and appeared to be able to supervise, not only the affairs of his vast diocese, but the most apparently trivial arrangement of his household. During the year of the Jubilee of Milan crosses were erected on the roads in order to guide the pilgrims on their way, and at the same time recall to their minds the Passion of Christ, and when they arrived in the city they were lodged and fed at houses specially set apart for them.

It was decreed that the visits to the churches should be made on foot, and in the interior of the churches men and women occupied different sides, a partition separating them in some places, in others a wooden screen. Milan was on fire with religious enthusiasm ; men and women of the highest rank walked in procession, attired in sackcloth, a cord round their throats, and holding crucifixes in their hands. They went on their way from the Duomo to Sant' Ambrogio, from Santa Maria delle Grazie to San Stefano, from church to church, from altar to altar, singing hymns, reciting litanies, giving striking signs of sincere penance for past offences, of confident



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hope in a blessed future, and of fervent piety in the living present.

"The people continue to perform the devotions of the Jubilee with extraordinary fervour," their Archbishop wrote, in the joy of his heart, to the Papal Nuncio in Spain; "many walk barefooted, either alone or in procession; the various colleges and professions form processions composed of their members; they carry the cross of their parish before them, or else that of their Order. We have heard rumours of the plague. . . . Every day thousands come from the surrounding country, and I have endeavoured to arrange that in one day they can perform all the necessary good works. Every day, in all the churches, but particularly in the Duomo, I and my priests give Holy Communion to thousands of people. . . . I have published a little book of prayers that also gives an account of the relics exposed in the different churches. . . .

"I have provided a hospice for strangers, where they are lodged and fed; and not only do the nobles and citizens give alms abundantly, they also wash the feet of the poor pilgrims and serve them in every way."

While the saintly ascetic thus rejoiced in the fervour of his flock, they in their turn looked with feelings of awe and reverence on their beloved pastor, who not only preached, administered the Sacraments, arranged and foresaw everything, but also himself went barefooted

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## “Tales Ambio Defensores”

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through the streets, and washed the feet of the poor pilgrims in the hospice.

In those days Milan was a holy city, but, alas! the note of warning had been sounded. The plague! Not all the prayers and penances, the tears of repentance, the deeds of heroic charity, the long fasts, the severe abstinences—not all these could stay the hand of God.

It was approaching, slowly, gradually; the awful Thing was coming nearer and nearer to the doomed city; and even while the souls of the inhabitants were filled with celestial joy, that horrible Thing was waiting to seize their poor bodies. Even the stainless life of their saintly Archbishop could not avert the terrible scourge.

Milan was doomed!

## CHAPTER XXI

### "THE PLAGUE OF ST. CHARLES"

MILAN was *en fête*. The decorations of the streets were on a scale of extraordinary magnificence, the walls and balconies were hung with rich satins and brocades, wreaths of flowers and of plants hung over the gateways, and ivy was twined round the columns and over the doors. The bells rang out a joyous peal, the people cheered, as the heralds announced in stentorian tones that His Royal Highness Don John of Austria, conqueror of Lepanto, and half-brother of the King of Spain, had arrived in their city.

The Marquis d'Ayamonte, then Governor, the nobility, the citizens, all vied in doing honour and paying homage to the man whom the King delighted to honour, the gay, gallant, handsome young Prince. Even while the triumphal procession wended its way through the thronged streets, there was a distressed cry of "Misericordia! misericordia!" At first scarcely audible, it gradually rose into a shriek; it was taken up by hundreds of voices, "Misericordia! misericordia! O God, have mercy on us, for the plague is in our city!" Those gay and gallant cavaliers heard

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## “The Plague of St. Charles”

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it, and their hot blood turned to ice in their veins, their dauntless courage ebbed away before the terrible spectre of this black and sudden Death, and without a moment's hesitation they fled at headlong speed from the doomed city!

Thus Milan was left without a Governor, without a Senate, in this her hour of direst need, of most unimaginable agony. But there was one who did not fly—nay, who hastened back, the instant he heard the fatal news, from Lodi, where he had been consoling and administering the last Sacraments to his friend Monsignor Scarampa, Bishop of Lodi. He went direct to the Duomo, and there he prayed long and fervently; then he visited the infected quarters, and endeavoured to encourage the people, who knelt before him, begging him to bless and pray for them. They were in a state of abject terror; disorder reigned supreme, and Charles was the one strong man in that great and populous city, the only one who was capable of stemming the panic; to him they all instinctively turned, and he was not found wanting.

He immediately convoked a meeting at his palace of the few magistrates who had remained faithful to their trust, and with them adopted strenuous measures to prevent contagion, and to administer to those stricken by the horrible malady. Like an angel of charity, the austere ascetic, now transformed into a tender father, a gentle nurse, a loving friend, went day and night

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through the streets and squares of the city, into the infected houses, carrying with him as his only protection against contagion a sponge dipped in vinegar, but armed with the impenetrable shield of a boundless confidence in God and an overwhelming love of his flock. He went about barefooted, carrying the big wooden crucifix that is now in the Duomo, the object of enthusiastic and fervent veneration. Thus he walked through the plague-stricken city, consoling, encouraging, quelling tumults, settling disputes, helping by word and deed the maddened, panic-stricken people.

The lazaretto outside the city walls was soon full. It was necessary that other accommodation should be found. Thatched cabins were erected at various places, and at a distance from the city. They were surrounded by large ditches filled with water, and only accessible through one gate. This was to guard against contagion, and prevent those infected with the malady from leaving. Every precaution was taken to prevent the spread of the fearsome Thing, and at the same time no means were neglected to give aid to the souls and bodies of the plague-stricken.

I cannot better describe Charles during this appalling trial, when with such heroic courage he succoured his afflicted people by every means in his power, than by quoting Manzoni's graphic description in the "*I Promessi Sposi*" of the conduct of his cousin and successor under similar circumstances. The beautiful and realistic narrative applies with

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## “The Plague of St. Charles”

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equal truth and justice to both Borromei. It runs as follows :

“The Cardinal, as was to be expected, gave encouragement and example to all. Having seen many perish around him, and solicited by magistrates, relatives, friends, and Princes, to withdraw from danger, he absolutely refused, writing at the same time to his clergy :

“‘Be ready to abandon this mortal life rather than the people committed to your care. Go forward amongst the plague-stricken as to life, as to a reward, even if there is only one soul to be won to Christ.’

“He did not neglect necessary precautions, and he gave instructions and regulations to his clergy to do likewise, but at the same time he did not fear—in fact, was absolutely indifferent to danger when it was necessary to encounter it to do good. Without speaking of the ecclesiastics, whom he was constantly inspiring, commending their zeal, arousing the lukewarm, and inducing them to go to the posts where others had perished, he wished that those who desired to see him should always be able to do so without difficulty. He visited the lazarettoes to give consolation to the sick and encouragement to the attendants. He traversed the city, carrying relief to the poor creatures sequestered in their houses, stopping at the doors and under the windows to listen to their lamentations and to offer words of hope and consolation. In a word, he threw himself into, and lived in the midst of,



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the pestilence, and was astonished himself that he came out uninjured."

It is a strange fact that not only did the Archbishop escape contagion, but scarce any of the clergy and religious of both sexes who assisted him in his sublime task were stricken by the plague. The Capuchins, the Jesuits, the Virgins of St. Ursula, ably seconded him, and the secular clergy, encouraged and fortified by his words and example, generously devoted their lives to the service of God in the person of His suffering members; but amongst all the noble and heroic souls who co-operated with Charles, those who most deserve our admiration and reverence were undoubtedly the physicians.

Without any *arrière-pensée*, without hope of glory or distinction either in this world or the next, these noble and devoted medical men went daily into the very jaws of death, into the mouth of hell. They had neither the supernatural courage of the confessor or martyr to inspire them, nor the intrepid daring and desire of deathless fame that causes the soldier to "seek the bubble reputation even at the cannon's mouth," to encourage them. They had nothing to help them but the approval of their consciences, the knowledge of duty fulfilled. They came from many countries, from Rome, from France, from the neighbouring States, these heroic healers of the body; and they were willing to sacrifice their lives ungrudgingly in the cause of humanity without hope of favour or reward.

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## “The Plague of St. Charles”

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Notwithstanding the precautions adopted, and notwithstanding the supplications of the saintly ascetic, who at that moment was the virtual Governor of Milan—although he caused prayers to be unceasingly offered up, and he and his priests never for an instant relaxed in these continuous devotions, yet the ghastly spectre still walked abroad, the dread pestilence still ravaged the hapless city.

“*Quomodo sedet sola civitas plena populo!*” cries Charles Borromeo from the pulpit of Sant Ambrogio, as with streaming eyes and burning words he addresses the shuddering people, and they answer as with one voice in accents of heartrending despair: “*Dio, Dio nostro, misericordia!*”

Then Charles speaks to them of the terrible effects of the Divine wrath; he implores them thoroughly to examine their consciences, to do penance for their sins, and with humble prayer and sincere promises of amendment to entreat their heavenly Father to have mercy upon them. The people listen, and their hearts are stirred; they press round the pulpit, forgetful of the danger of coming near each other; they gather round him. They kiss his bare and bleeding feet when he descends from the pulpit; for as he walked in the procession from the Duomo to Sant Ambrogio, a nail had pierced his naked foot, and the blood was flowing from it copiously. Many dip their handkerchiefs in this red and holy

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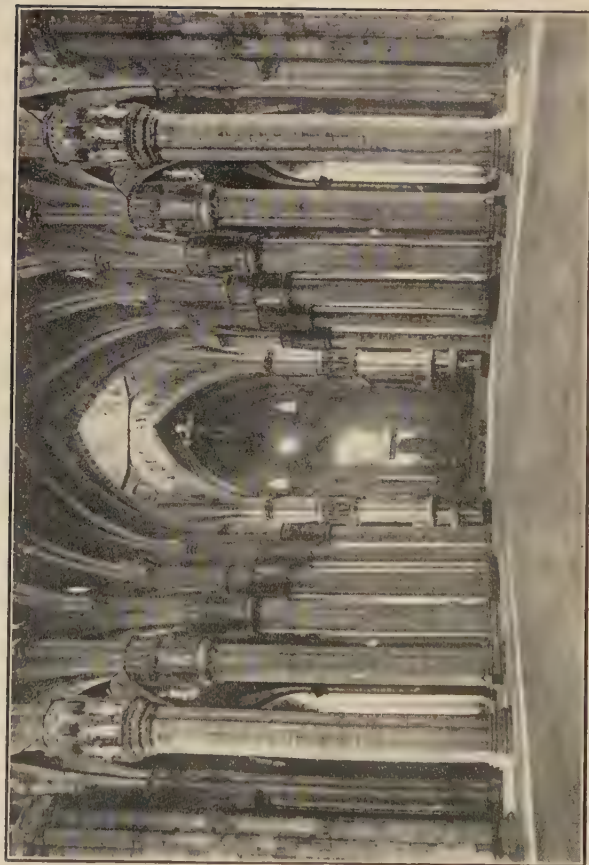
## St. Charles Borromeo

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stream ; but Charles pays no heed to the physical pain and exhaustion his wound causes him. With his deep eyes fixed in loving confidence on the crucifix he carries, he passes on his way.

As we see in imagination his bowed and wasted form passing through the streets, the cross held aloft, the penitent people following him with prayers and lamentations, we realize why it was that the dread visitation of 1576-77 was then and has ever since been called "The Plague of St. Charles." His was the leading figure, his the ruling spirit, and, in the words of Manzoni : "So powerful is Charity ! The plague that desolated the Milanese in 1576-77 is still called The Plague of San Carlo. Among the various and awful recollections of a general calamity, she could cause the personality of one individual to predominate. Why ? Because Charity had inspired him with feelings and actions more memorable than even the evils themselves ; she could set him up in the minds of men as a symbol of all these events, because in all she had urged him onward, and held him up to view as guide and helper, example and voluntary victim, and has framed for him as it were an emblematical device out of a public calamity, naming it after him, as though it were a glorious conquest or a wonderful discovery."





THE NAVE OF THE DUOMO.

## CHAPTER XXII

### "THE GREATER OF THESE"

"CHARITY never falleth away : whether prophecies shall be made void, or tongues shall cease, or knowledge shall be destroyed. . . . And now there remain faith, hope, charity, these three ; and the greater of these is charity " (1 Cor. xiii. 13).

"Bring out your dead ! Bring out your sick !" The mournful cry echoes through the streets of the erstwhile populous and pleasure-loving city. The *apparitori* appear, preceding the carts on which lie the dying and the dead ; and as they walk they ring a bell to warn people of the approach of the gloomy cortège, and shout their dismal order : "Bring out your sick ! Bring out your dead !"

Then the *monatti* follow ; they take the corpses from the houses, placing them on the carts on which they are to be carried to the cemetery. They also remove the sick ; and these they also place in carts, on which they will be conveyed to the lazarettoes.

The inhabitants of the closed houses look on in mournful silence while their dear ones, living



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## St. Charles Borromeo

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and dead, are borne away from them. It is forbidden to those in health to go in or out of the houses or walk in the streets ; only when stricken by the pestilence can they be taken away. Even as the miserable creatures follow with despairing eyes the sad procession of the dying and the dead, another bell rings out. They hear the clear, sonorous peal from the great campanile of the Duomo, and at its sound their dull eyes brighten and their haggard faces flush, for it sounds a message of hope and of mercy.

At the end of each street is an altar, and at the tolling of the bell the Archbishop and his priests come down the deserted streets and offer up the Holy Sacrifice at these altars. Then they go round and hear confessions, the penitents leaning out of the windows. In order to hear those in the upper stories, the priests make use of a high stool or ladder, mounting on it ; this they also do when giving Holy Communion.

Seven times during the day and seven times during the night prayers are offered up, litanies are sung, psalms chanted.

“ More things are wrought by prayer  
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice  
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.”

The voices of the citizens of Milan rose in perpetual prayer and adoration, and their devoted Archbishop and his clergy went their ceaseless rounds, administering the Sacraments and bring-

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## “The Greater of These”

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ing help, not only to agonized souls, but to starving bodies. Charles was invariably followed by two men on horseback carrying provisions, and he himself always contrived to have money to give when required.

How he managed to do so Heaven only knows, for he had long ago exhausted all apparently available means; he had neither money, goods, nor chattels; he had sold all, and yet, somehow, some charitable individual always turned up at the moment when his purse and larder were empty, and supplied him with enough to go on with until some other kind-hearted and liberal friend came forward with his or her donation.

Historians say that during the plague from sixty to seventy thousand poor people were fed every day. Charles not only gave them their meals, he also found work for the able-bodied; he clothed the naked, tearing down, when he had nothing else left, the rich tapestries that covered the walls of the archiepiscopal palace and getting them fashioned into garments.

During this strenuous time of overstrain and trouble, he followed out literally the Gospel precept, for he gave food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty; he clothed the naked, he visited the sick, and he buried the dead.

Having discovered that many had never received the Sacrament of Confirmation, he vested pontifically and went through the streets administering the Sacrament to the citizens at their own doors

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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and windows. Then, hearing that within the lazarettoes there were some unfortunate creatures unconfirmed, he penetrated into these dread regions beyond the city gates. The plague-stricken fell at his feet blessing him as he passed along, and one man to whom he administered Confirmation fell dead at the very moment he received the Sacrament. Charles wrote to his friend, the Bishop of Rimini, during the dreadful visitation :

“ In the midst of the cruel, not to say horrible, spectacle of the dreadful and daily increasing pestilence, nothing gives me so much consolation as the celebration of these saturnalia of religion—if I may be permitted to speak thus of these pious exercises. The fervour and constancy of the people that urges them to offer up ardent and voluntary prayers day and night is such that, if you were here, you would be transported with joy, and you would have an unshaken confidence—I will not say that they will all recover bodily health—but I believe that their souls will be saved.”

To the prayers of his flock Charles added his own supreme abnegation and devotion. He was to be seen everywhere day and night, presiding at the public prayers, offering the Holy Sacrifice, administering the Sacraments, rescuing, aiding with head and hand. On one occasion he saw a monk stretched on a straw bed on the roadside and shivering with cold. Charles took off his own cloak, wrapped it round the poor man, and remained praying beside him in the bitter wind,

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## “The Greater of These”

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until the soul passed peacefully away. He often rescued little children whom he found lying beside their dead mothers, carrying them in his arms until he could find some kind women to take charge of the little ones. The Virgins of St. Ursula took care of many of these poor forsaken babies. On one occasion, however, Charles found a newly-born infant covered with plague-spots. He at once baptized her, but he felt he could not, in justice to others, give her into anyone's charge, so he procured a goat and fed her with its milk; then, when she had recovered, he provided shelter for her and other infants outside the city walls, getting a flock of goats, so that the little ones were thus supplied with food and shelter. The infant thus miraculously preserved grew to womanhood, married a wealthy man called Philip Nava, and took great pleasure in frequently relating the above details.

In a somewhat similar case, the rescued baby was at the point of death, but when Charles gave her his benediction she was restored to health. This child he confided to the Virgins of St. Ursula.

On October 15, 1556, Charles consecrated the city to the glorious soldier-martyr, St. Sebastian. The Church venerates him in a special manner as the patron of the plague-stricken. The Milanese have always cherished a particular devotion to him, and look upon him as one of their greatest protectors, because his mother was a native of

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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their city. Therefore, at the suggestion of Charles, the people gladly made a solemn vow to rebuild the Church of San Sebastiano—it was then in ruins—to found a perpetual daily Mass in his honour, and to fast every year on the vigil of his feast. They gave a beautiful silver reliquary, in which his relics were enclosed, and went with it in procession to his church, promising to do so for ten years on the anniversary, and to do so for ever on his festival.

Many other processions took place, particularly of the Holy Nail. This sacred relic of our Divine Lord's Passion was carried by the Archbishop from church to church. They were wonderful spectacles, showing the fervent zeal of the pastor and the ardent piety of his people. It is a strange fact that during their progress not a single individual contracted the pestilence.

But the Governor, who had at last returned to his post, ordered that these solemn and holy processions should cease, saying they but helped to spread contagion. He helped the people, however, in another way, for he relieved the citizens from the tax of 40,000 scudi, a tax they had been previously obliged to pay to the Council of the Decurioni.

Early in 1577 the plague showed signs of abating, and Charles then published the Jubilee in Milan and in the villages of the surrounding country that had been attacked by the pestilence. He also compiled a small book, a *memoriale*

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## “The Greater of These”

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addressed particularly to his suffragans, and in which he described the evils with which he had to contend. He was so worn out from the terrible strain that while dictating to his secretary he often dozed off, but, quickly waking up, he would continue taking up the thread of his discourse exactly where he had left off.

The spring brought hope and consolation, and the spirits of the people rose even as the earth put forth her blossoms. The worst was over. The long battle against disease and death was fought and won. Faith, hope and charity had triumphed. Milan was herself again—yet, no, not quite her old worldly, pleasure-loving self. She was regenerated, purified; and when on May 3, 1577, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, Charles Borromeo carried the Holy Nail in solemn procession from the Duomo to San Sepolcro, the Governor, the magistrates, and all the citizens, followed, praying devoutly, and many even shed tears. On the return to the Duomo, Charles exposed the Holy Nail during the Quarant' Ore. When all was over and the sacred relic was restored to its place, Charles followed it with loving eyes as it was raised on high, and, carried away by the fire of Divine love that consumed his soul, he exclaimed: “Non dimittam te nisi benedisceris mihi.”



## CHAPTER XXIII

### *"NOT PEACE, BUT THE SWORD"*

"Do not think that I came to send peace upon earth ; I came not to send peace, but the sword. . . . And a man's enemies shall be they of his own household " (Matt. x. 34, 36).

It was apparently the fate of the ascetic Archbishop of Milan, of the man who was Cardinal of Santa Prassede—the Church of Peace—ever to live in the midst of storm and stress, never to be able to sheath the sword, but to have until his dying day to fight the good fight in defence of the liberties of Holy Church. The plague had ceased to ravage the fair city of Milan and the fertile plains of Lombardy ; the danger was past, so the Governor recovered from his panic, and bade defiance to the saviour of the country that he himself had abandoned in her hour of trouble.

The Marquis d'Ayamonte was a Spaniard and a grandee of Spain, and he possessed in a marked degree the worst characteristics of a Spaniard and a grandee.

He was arrogant, obstinate, overbearing, and ignorant in a superlative degree, and he cherished

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## “Not Peace, but the Sword”

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an insane resentment against Charles, not only because the Archbishop had mildly reproved him for deserting his post, but also, and even more, because Charles had given him an example of heroic self-forgetfulness in succouring the afflicted citizens and nobly living mid the dying and the dead.

People of the type of d'Ayamonte never forgive sublime generosity and self-sacrifice either in their friends or foes, for it is a reflection on their own selfish cowardice.

Yet even before the terrible visitation, a note of discord had been struck between the two rulers of Milan. D'Ayamonte had come prepared to dislike Charles Borromeo, for he knew that the Archbishop had excommunicated and caused the removal of the former Governor. Their first meeting was not amiable. Charles describes it with a touch of good-humoured sarcasm in a letter to Monsignor Castelli :

“After the departure of Don Luis de Requesens for Flanders, I considered it my duty to pay my respects to the new Governor, the Marquis d'Ayamonte. I went to see him to-day, fully resolved not to speak about past controversies, but he himself started the subject, and insisted on continuing it. He received me in his ante-chamber, and we remained there conversing in the midst of a crowd of people. I do not know whether he acted thus through pride, or whether Spanish etiquette decrees that on a first visit one

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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should be received in this manner, or perhaps he feared I intended asking a favour."

This interview showed plainly that the new Governor was determined to treat the man he looked upon as a rival in a very cavalier, not to say impudent, fashion. He was unreasonably jealous of the influence the saintly Archbishop possessed over the citizens of Milan, and his jealousy increased a hundredfold when, during and after the plague, the people added love and admiration to their confidence.

The Marquis d'Ayamonte, meeting Charles one day, could not refrain from giving way to a paroxysm of ungovernable anger, saying furiously: "It is unbearable, the way the people here love you; why, they almost worship you. And I, who am the Minister of the most powerful monarch—they barely tolerate me."

With curious yet natural inconsistency, d'Ayamonte later on made it a subject of one of his numerous complaints to the Holy See, that the Milanese detested their Cardinal Archbishop, and that consequently the Pope ought to remove him from a diocese where his presence was obnoxious to his flock.

This was not the only untrue and absurd statement made by the Governor; his chief accusations to the Sovereign Pontiff and to the Most Catholic King against the Archbishop were the following: During the plague Cardinal Borromeo had exempted his clergy from conforming to the

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## “Not Peace, but the Sword”

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regulations made by the magistrates; he had made his own rules anent the quarantine; he sent his priests about with certificates of health signed only by himself or his vicars. He had forbidden sports, games, balls, and profane amusements, to be held on Sunday and days of obligation, decreeing that they should be devoted to prayer and good works. He had also made certain sins reserved cases, and he had forbidden meat to be eaten on the first Sunday in Lent, making it a day of abstinence. He had prohibited people from taking a short-cut through the churches, and walled up the doors to prevent them from continuing to do so, and he had caused partitions to be erected between the men and the women. Then he had instituted a new holiday of obligation, proclaiming that the feast of SS. Gervasius and Protasius should be observed as such.

These were the heinous offences of which Charles Borromeo was accused. A special envoy and deputies were sent to Rome and to Madrid, a memorial was signed by the Governor and his friends, and they did all in their power to blacken the reputation of the Cardinal.

He, calm, dignified and resolute, continued to exercise ecclesiastical authority and to uphold the rights of Holy Church. In fact, he extended his jurisdiction to the utmost limits, and seized and imprisoned culprits who had offended against the canon law. The Governor was furious; he swore, he threatened, all in vain; Charles was not to be

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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browbeaten, and pursued the even tenor of his way, undisturbed and undismayed by the menaces of his remorseless foe.

In the midst of this desperate struggle for the supremacy between the civil and religious authorities, the Cardinal of Santa Prassede was able to enjoy a brief period of peace and rest. Peace and rest for his mind, for he only increased his bodily labours by the undertaking, which, though physically fatiguing, refreshed and reinvigorated him mentally. This was a pilgrimage made on foot, staff in hand, to the Holy Winding-Sheet of Our Blessed Lord.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### *THE HOLY WINDING-SHEET*

CHARLES BORROMEO was in the fullest meaning of the word Catholic—that is to say, universal—in his love and veneration for the many and numerous devotions approved of by Holy Church. Yet even as the tenderest and most loving of parents will often cherish a special affection for one child, so our saint had a quite special devotion to the Holy Eucharist, the Sacred Passion of Christ, and the Mother of God.

When he took possession of the See of Milan, he found to his horror and dismay that the Blessed Sacrament was often treated with scant ceremony, frequently with actual disrespect, not only in remote parishes, but in the towns of the Milanese and even in the great City of the Plains.

To remedy this he founded a confraternity in honour of the Blessed Sacrament. He commenced the regulations which he laid down for their observance thus: "The greatness of the love shown us by our Divine Lord in remaining with us for ever in the Blessed Sacrament should compel us to show the greatness of our love for Him by honouring and reverencing Him always and in



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## St. Charles Borromeo

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every possible way in this august Sacrament, making it a sacred duty to do so."

At Milan the members of this confraternity were obliged to walk in the processions of the Blessed Sacrament on Sundays and holidays.

The devotion Charles felt towards the Passion of our Saviour was no less fervent and intense. He venerated with great affection all the relics connected with it. In his Cardinal's church of Santa Prassede the Sacred Column was preserved. At Milan the Holy Nail was the object of veneration to all, but particularly to the Archbishop. At Chambéry the Holy Winding-Sheet was treasured by the Princes of the House of Savoy as their dearest possession, and it was to venerate this holy relic that Charles set out from Milan on October 6, 1578. He was accompanied by Father Adorno, S.J., and by eleven members of his household.

Father Adorno, S.J., was to act as spiritual director to the pilgrims. He has given a detailed and interesting account of the journey in his "*Relazione del Viaggio di San Carlo Borromeo a Torino per visitare la Sacra Sindone.*" It is, however, too long to give here verbatim; we can only select a few of the principal episodes. When Philibert Emmanuel, Duke of Savoy, heard of the intention of the Archbishop of Milan to go on a pilgrimage to the shrine where the Holy Winding-Sheet was preserved, he immediately ordered the removal of the priceless relic from Chambéry to Turin, in order to spare Charles the long

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## The Holy Winding-Sheet

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journey across the Alps. He invited our saint to stay with him at his palace. Charles accepted, and, after a physically-fatiguing yet soul-inspiring journey of four days, arrived at the capital of Piedmont, where he was right royally welcomed. Bells were rung, salvos of artillery were fired, the Prince, the nobles, and citizens, went forth to meet the humble pilgrims, greeting them with enthusiasm and veneration.

Charles had divested himself of all the insignia of his high rank when passing under the Porta Vercelli at Milan, so there was nothing about him to distinguish him from his companions, but Princes and people at once recognized him. All saw at a glance that the fragile, emaciated man, with the slightly round shoulders, the worn face, in which the deep-set eyes burned with the light that is not of earth, but of heaven, was the leader, the hero, and the saint.

On the Friday following Charles offered up the Holy Sacrifice in the Capella della Sacra Sindone in the Duomo, and gave Holy Communion to several persons, and then the Holy Winding-Sheet was exposed to the veneration of the faithful.

"I must candidly acknowledge," writes Father Adorno, S.J., "that I was so overcome at the first sight of this precious relic that words failed me. The Cardinal had asked me to preach, but I could not utter a syllable; sobs choked my voice, and tears streamed down my face. I was, as it were,

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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paralyzed by the strength of my feelings. I had seen a picture of the Holy Winding-Sheet—but what is a picture compared to the living reality? What tears were shed! what fervent prayers were offered up! Many had the happiness of kissing the precious blood that had flowed from the heart and the feet of our Lord. They did so with inexpressible tenderness and love. . . .

“ Later on the Holy Winding-Sheet was carried in procession from the Duomo to the Piazza Castello, in the very centre of the city, where, on a raised altar, it was exposed to the veneration of the faithful. The Cardinal and the Bishops showed it to the people, spreading it out before their eyes; then, in the midst of exclamations of piety and of joy, the blessed relic was carried back into the *capella*. The Quarant’ Ore commenced, and day and night members of confraternities, students, all classes, came in turn to pray and to sing canticles of praise. Pilgrims came in crowds from the surrounding country. . . .

“ Cardinal Borromeo preached twice. It was remarked that every time the Duke looked at the Holy Winding-Sheet he shed tears. Several heretics having come from Lucerne to see the Cardinal, the Duke asked that the devotions should continue for another day, so that they might have a chance of hearing the Cardinal, and might be enlightened by his discourse and that of the Bishops.

“ The following day the Duke dined with the

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## The Holy Winding-Sheet

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Cardinal, and after the repast they spent a couple of hours together conversing on spiritual subjects. . . . St. Charles had resolved to start that afternoon. The Duke and his son knelt before him, saying they would not rise until he had given his blessing to them and to their descendants. Charles then gave them his blessing, and Philibert Emmanuel, turning to his son Charles Emmanuel, said, first in French and then in Italian, so that the Cardinal might understand: "My son, look upon the Cardinal as your father; obey and honour him as though you were indeed his son, and beg him to accept you as his son!" Then, turning to the Cardinal, he cried: "I beg you to look upon him as a son!"

This young Prince, Charles Emmanuel, was afterwards to be the friend and Sovereign of St. Francis de Sales.

At this time, 1578, the Gentle Saint was a boy of eleven, studying at the College of La Roche in Savoy. We wonder, did he then hear of the pilgrimage made by Charles Borromeo—the Archbishop he afterwards venerated and imitated—to that precious and priceless relic, kneeling before which his mother, Madame de Boissy, had consecrated him even before his birth to the service of God.

On their return journey, the Cardinal and his companions stopped *en route* at Varallo, where he had spent some days in 1571.

This blessed spot was very dear to him. More

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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than a hundred years previously, on a hill overlooking the town, a Franciscan priest, the venerable Bernardino Caima, on his return from Jerusalem, had built a convent of his Order and a beautiful church, in which he had placed a representation of the Holy Sepulchre.

At certain distances from the church there were several little chapels, each one dedicated to one of the principal mysteries in the life of our Lord ; there were about forty of these wayside sanctuaries.

On October 21, 1578, our saint once more came to this sacred place, arriving about three in the afternoon. Father Adorno, S.J., gives a graphic description of this second visit.

"From the town," he writes, "we went on foot at once to the mountain, in order to visit the sacred mysteries without delay. One of us gave the points of meditation relative to each mystery, and we dwelt on them for a longer or shorter time, according to the importance of the mystery. We stayed there until eight o'clock at night, when we went off to get something to eat. Up to that hour we had eaten absolutely nothing all day. This late meal consisted of bread and wine ; as for the Cardinal, he drank water instead of wine. He then returned to the holy mountain accompanied by one of us, remaining there until three in the morning. This individual felt the intense cold so much that they returned, in order that he might be able to warm himself. They only slept for two hours on chairs. Then they

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## The Holy Winding-Sheet

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gave themselves to prayer and meditation until it was time to celebrate Holy Mass.

"I have related all this," Father Adorno, S.J., continues, "that you may know how God helps His servant in the midst of the most fatiguing work. He is always remarkably well, although he invariably goes to bed very late, and rises at four every morning. He eats nothing from the hour of Matins until three o'clock in the afternoon of the following day, even though he has travelled for hours without a rest, either on foot or on horseback."

Arrived at Milan and warmly welcomed by his flock, he heard that his pilgrimage had caused a sensation—was, in fact, a nine days' wonder. Some admired, some censured him, shaking their heads and saying that it was unfitting the dignity of a Prince of the Church to go on foot, and humbly clad, through the country.

Gregory XIII. agreed with these carpers, remarking that he could not understand why Cardinal Borromeo had gone on foot to Turin. When Charles heard of these various and varying criticisms, he smiled slightly and was quite undisturbed. He wrote to his agent in Rome, Monsignor Speciano, who had acquainted him with the remarks made by the Pope and others :

"As to what you tell me people say about my journey to Turin, I wish you to understand that on such occasions the principal thing is to do what one considers right, and to be perfectly indifferent to the world's opinions."



## CHAPTER XXV

### *THE OBLATES OF ST. AMBROSE*

IN 1558 Charles Borromeo wrote to Monsignor Speciano: "I have finally decided to commence, with God's help, the work I have so long meditated, namely, founding an Order of clerics who are already priests, under the title of the Oblates of St. Ambrose. I will give them a house near the Church of San Sepolcro. They will live in community, following the rules that I or my successors will lay down for their guidance. They will not be allowed to accept a benefice outside their diocese. Their principal object will be to devote their lives to the service of the Ambrosian Rite, and after a sufficient probation they will make a vow to do so. They will preach, hear confessions, give the Bread of Life to the faithful, and administer the Sacraments wherever they are sent. They will direct schools, colleges, and pious confraternities. In brief, they will do their utmost to promote the greater glory of God. . . .

"I have already found several priests and laymen who are desirous of embracing this state of life; some are willing to take perpetual vows, others will only agree to make them for my lifetime."

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## The Oblates of St. Ambrose

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Charles then asks Monsignor Speciano to obtain for him from the Pope various privileges and indulgences for his new Order, and also to be allowed to use certain sums for it that he had formerly given to other good works. He entreats his agent not to lose time, as he is desirous to start this congregation before April 16, when the meeting of his diocesan synod would take place.

"If I have the Papal sanction, I shall be at liberty to establish by degrees the customs and regulations best suited to the congregation." Then he adds: "Tell Messer Filippo to have ready to send me a number of his priests; they will serve as an auxiliary force to our army. At any rate, get him to promise to treat with me on the subject."

Charles had previously consulted St. Philip Neri, but they did not quite agree. They were certainly both of opinion that a congregation of secular priests devoting their lives to their own sanctification and the salvation of souls would be an inestimable advantage anywhere, but they differed about details. Charles as a prelate sought principally for assistance in the government of his diocese; Philip as a simple priest desired only to induce other priests to lead a life of perfection, and aid the faithful more by their good example than by visiting the diocese, examining the clergy, and such-like work: for Charles wished the Oblates to be his ministers, and help him to bear the burden of his vast diocese.

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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"I see that the ideas of the Oratorians are different from mine," Charles wrote to Monsignor Speciano; "they want their congregation to depend on themselves only, and I want everything to depend on me; it is my object to have a body of men ready to obey me implicitly."

Their name "Oblati" expresses the spirit of their Order; theirs was to be a willing oblation, and, as we shall see, it was decided that their only vow was one of obedience to their Bishop.

Charles, however, was very anxious to get Philip's opinion. The ascetic and reforming Cardinal did not feel that confidence in his own judgment on this important matter that one would have expected.

He, who was generally so decided, so inflexible, so autocratic—nay, almost despotic—hesitated, asked the advice of several persons, and at last, on his visit to Rome in 1579, entreated Philip to read over the rules carefully, and suggest any alterations he pleased. Philip first refused; then, when Charles continued to implore him almost with tears, he finally consented. He carefully read the Rule of the Oblates, and then said to the Archbishop that he considered it would not be expedient for the Oblates to take a vow of poverty.

The two friends discussed the question, neither would give in; at last Philip said, with his charming smile: "You asked me to go for a drive with you. Agreed, on condition that I give the coachman his orders."

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## The Oblates of St. Ambrose

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"As you please, Father Philip," replied Charles, who knew the Oratorian's little ways, and guessed that this request meant something of importance.

"Then," said St. Philip genially and with another sunny smile, "we will drive to the Convent of the Capuchins in the Piazza Barberini, and we will consult Brother Felix."

Charles was aghast, and was even more stupefied when he saw "Brother Felix," who was only a poor lay-brother, apparently both ignorant and stupid, for he could not even read. Was it a jest on the part of the sportive Philip? A two-edged jest, probably intended to give a lesson in humility to the illustrious Cardinal. Philip was fond of giving such spiritual alms to his friends and penitents.

On one occasion, when Charles's sister, Anna Colonna, met her director in the Street of the Apostles, on her way to the Colonna Palace, she knelt down and asked his blessing. He gave it to her, but while doing so managed to loosen her hair so that it fell over her shoulders, and everyone gazed at her in astonishment.

Charles knew of this incident, and when he saw the heavy, ungainly lay-brother who was asked to revise his Rule, he must have wondered if Philip meant to divert himself at his expense. Anna had taken her mortifications in good part, receiving it with sweet humility; Charles was not to be outdone by his sister, so he listened quietly to the discussion between Father Philip and

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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Brother Felix: for the humble lay-brother had first refused to give an opinion on the matter, alleging that he could not even read the document; but Philip finally ordered him in virtue of holy obedience to have it read to him, to meditate on it, and to tell them if he disapproved of anything in it.

Brother Felix took the manuscript, opened it, and without a moment's hesitation, placing his finger on the rule ordaining the poverty, said with decision: "This must be effaced!" Then with a charming smile he handed the document to the Cardinal, refusing to say another word on the subject.

Charles believed that it was the voice of the Holy Ghost speaking to him through the mouth of a rude, ignorant, but saintly and humble man.

He accordingly struck out the words binding the Oblates to poverty, and contented himself with recommending them to practise it.

Charles afterwards learned that the rough Capuchin was really a great saint, hiding heavenly wisdom and marvellous sanctity beneath a lowly and unprepossessing exterior.

Brother Felix was a native of Cantalice, who spent his life up to his thirty-sixth year as a labourer in the fields. He then became a labourer in the Lord's vineyard, becoming a Capuchin friar. He was one of those holy men who throughout their lives give signal proofs of the "foolishness

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## The Oblates of St. Ambrose

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of the Cross," seeming to the eyes of ordinary men somewhat eccentric. But when he died all Rome mourned for him; Father Bordini wrote as follows about him:

"Brother Felix the Capuchin is dead, and everyone grieves for him. They kept him three days unburied, and so great was the crowd, and so fervent their devotion, that they left him without habit or beard. . . . Nothing is talked about in Rome but Brother Felix, a man who was so lowly that he was almost despised during his life."

The humble lay-brother is now venerated by us as St. Felix of Cantalice.

Some time previously, in August, 1578, on the feast of St. Simplician, Charles had practically founded the Congregation of the Oblates. He placed them under the protection of our Lady and of St. Ambrose, and they were styled the Oblates of St. Ambrose; but the Order is now called by his own name, and his sons all over the world bear the name of their saintly founder.

Many and various were the confraternities, congregations, seminaries, colleges, and Orders, founded by the reforming Cardinal, but the one he loved best was undoubtedly the Congregation of the Oblates. He loved and cherished it with the love of predilection, and his happiest hours were spent among his sons in the house near the old Church of San Sepolcro, close to where is now the Biblioteca Ambrosiana.



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## St. Charles Borromeo

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Here he held those famous reunions that must have in a way reminded him and his friends of the Vatican Nights, though these gatherings were devoted exclusively to discourses on sacred subjects, and to prayer interspersed with music. For Charles loved sweet harmonies as dearly as in the old days, when he had employed Palestrina to reform Church music. He adopted the stately Gregorian psalmody altogether in the churches, but in these familiar reunions he probably allowed his sons to indulge in brighter and lighter melodies, their voices rising in popular canzoni and hymns, or in part songs. There is an exquisite little motet by Palestrina for three voices that doubtless they often sang :

“ Gesù, sommo conforto,  
Tu'l mio beato porto  
E santo Redentore ;  
O gran bontà ! Dolce pietà !  
Felice quel che teco unito sta ! ”

While thus giving needful refreshment to the souls of the Oblates, their founder was equally careful of their bodily health, personally supervising all arrangements for their comfort. When they were ill, he was unwearying in his care and devotion, nursing them himself, procuring luxuries, consoling and praying for them ; and when Father Stoppani was dying, his loving Father importuned Heaven so untiringly and so strenuously that, at his intercession, our Lord restored the patient to health.

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## The Oblates of St. Ambrose

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Charles was asked why he had prayed so ardently for a man who was not of much importance. The Archbishop replied simply: "The life of a good priest is of inestimable value and of the greatest importance."

The Order increased daily; several laymen were affiliated to it; Charles obtained the approbation of the Holy See, and Gregory endowed it with many privileges and indulgences.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### *THE REFORMING CARDINAL*

THE struggle between ecclesiastical and civil power still went on at Milan, the Governor endeavouring in every way to thwart and annoy the Archbishop, particularly in the matter of games and amusements, insisting in defiance of the Cardinal's prohibition on holding them on Sundays and holidays at the hours of Divine service, and actually in the squares in front of the Duomo and other churches. Matters were at such a pass that Charles decided to set out for Rome in order to submit the questions in dispute to the Pope.

He went by way of Brescia to visit his suffragan Bishop, Dominico Bollani, who was dangerously ill. Charles was with him during his last moments, and also attended his funeral, celebrating pontifically in the cathedral on August 15, 1579.

He then went on to Mantua, and from there to Guastalla, where he stayed with his sister, Camilla di Gonzaga.

Spending a few days *en route* at the sanctuaries of Camaldoli, Monte Averno, and Loreto, he

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## The Reforming Cardinal

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reached Rome on September 13, 1579. There he was right royally welcomed, the people coming out in crowds to meet him, kneeling before him, entreating him to bless them, kissing his garments, and showing him the most convincing marks of veneration and affection.

Gregory XIII., who was *in villegiatura* at Frascati, at once sent for the Cardinal, received him with open arms, and showed him the greatest respect, even deference, assisted at his Mass, and received Holy Communion from his hands.

They then conversed on the matters in dispute. The Pope was convinced that Charles was in the right, and gave his sanction to everything. He approved all that had been done by the Cardinal at the fourth and fifth Provincial Councils held by him.

When the Governor's envoys arrived in Rome, they were greeted with very sarcastic remarks, and were jeered at by the populace, who nicknamed them *Ambasciatori del Carnovale*.

Before starting on his return journey northwards, Charles had a long and momentous interview with Gregory, in which they once more completely thrashed out the disputed points and the numberless complaints and accusations of the Governor, and the Pope again gave the sanction of the Holy See to all the decrees of the Cardinal.

"What am I to do if, when I arrive in Milan, there are more disputes?" Charles asked. "Shall I wait until you tell me what to do, or act independently?"

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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“If they attack the rights or the customs of your Church, defend them strenuously,” answered Gregory. “Do not yield an inch, even in trivial matters, and do what you please; it is not necessary for you to consult the Holy See.”

Charles left Rome on January 20, 1580; he visited Florence, where he was warmly greeted by the Duke of Tuscany, and then went on to Ferrara, arriving in that grey old city while King Carnival held his court. When Duke Alphonso d' Este heard of the approach of the sworn foe of these frivolous and often sinful masquerades, he ordered the *mascheroni* to be taken down, divested himself of the mask and disguise he was wearing, and commanded all the citizens to unmask.

He then went forth to receive his illustrious guest with almost regal honour, and during the six days the Cardinal passed at Ferrara, city and people were transformed. They were pious, decorous, quiet; jousts, games, and dances, were at an end. Everyone followed Charles from church to church; prayers, sermons, sacred music, were the order of the day; in short, one would have thought it was Holy Week instead of the gay season of the rollicking carnival.

From Ferrara the reforming Cardinal proceeded to Venice. He had been entrusted by the Pope with a mission to the Doge and Council anent the Inquisition. This he faithfully performed; at the same time he succeeded in effecting many salutary reforms among both clergy and laity.

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## The Reforming Cardinal

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He was surprised and grieved to find that the Bishops and priests went about in ordinary dress, and that sixteen prelates were living in the city, to the utter neglect of their sees.

This state of things must be put an end to. He expostulated with the offenders, who proved amenable, at once adopted the clerical garb, and promised not to absent themselves in future so frequently from their dioceses.

At Verona, at Vincenza, and at Brescia, he was received with demonstrations of affection and reverence. Indeed, at Vincenza the citizens declared they would not allow him to leave them, and they actually raised the drawbridge to prevent his departure.

But the enthusiastic receptions these cities accorded to him were but as moonlight unto sunlight compared to the sumptuous ovation his flock gave him. When he was yet some leagues from Milan, the inhabitants went forth to meet him, singing hymns, firing cannon, trumpets blowing, bells ringing. They pressed round him, so that he was almost suffocated. The mule he always rode was a vicious beast, most unmanageable, and given to kicking and plunging; but on this occasion he became quite lamblike, so that the people exclaimed: "Even the dumb beast knows how we love our dearest pastor; the wicked brute has become docile and will not hurt us, while we show our devotion to our Archbishop and press round him." Then they



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## St. Charles Borromeo

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shouted "Vivas!" and cried and sobbed aloud in the joy of their hearts, saying to each other: "He has come back to us, our dearest pastor. He has not stayed in Rome! It was a lie, an evil report, when men said he would never come back to us. Thank God you are here, Eminence. Bless your children, Padre mio!"

Overcome with emotion at the evidences of such great devotion, the Cardinal was unable to utter a syllable. Silent, but with tears of joy streaming from his eyes, and surrounded by his loving children, he made his triumphal entry into Milan.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### *THE MINISTER OF CHARLES BORROMEO*

ON Saturday Charles rode triumphantly into Milan, greeted by ringing cheers, by heart-felt prayers, and of cries of love and loyalty. On his arrival at the archiepiscopal palace, the Governor paid him a ceremonious visit. They talked together for awhile, apparently on good terms; everyone hoped the hatchet was buried. But the following day—the first Sunday in Lent—the Marquis d'Ayamonte once more threw down the glove, and defied not only the Cardinal, but the Sovereign Pontiff. Gregory had given his solemn approbation to all the decrees issued by Charles; therefore he had practically forbidden jousts, games, and other diversions, to be held on Sundays and holidays during the hours of Divine service.

The Governor, in defiance alike of Pope and Cardinal, held a tournament on that memorable Sunday in the piazza in front of the Duomo. He and his son were there, and some other members of his family. His wife, Donna Anna, absolutely refused to be present—in fact, attended Vespers while the jousts were in progress. A few of the nobles and citizens also sanctioned the

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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“diabolical jousts”—to use the words of an old chronicler—but the people *en masse* refused to take part in them either as actors or spectators.

The Marquis d’Ayamonte had to get from the garrison at Pavia a company of light horse to ride in the lists.

Charles was deeply grieved by this fresh proof of the Governor’s irreconcilable spirit. He had hoped for peace, and to be at last able to sheath the sword; but D’Ayamonte had evidently thrown away the scabbard, and was resolved to carry on the struggle. The Cardinal very reluctantly put nearly all who had taken part, or been present at the “diabolical jousts,” under the ban of Holy Church.

Charles wrote to Monsignor Speciano to acquaint him with the affair, telling him that he had not included D’Ayamonte and his son in the sentence of excommunication, considering them, as it were, outside the pale. “I consider,” he goes on, “my authority sufficiently vindicated. No one in future will take part in these jousts and profane diversions; even the soldiers refuse, yielding obedience to my edicts instead of to those of the Governor. On the whole this affair has but strengthened the ecclesiastical power, and I hope His Holiness will give to my acts the weight of his wise approbation.”

Gregory gave his sanction, and sent the Governor’s envoys out of Rome, having absolutely refused to give them any redress. He listened patiently and courteously to their accusa-

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## The Minister of Charles Borromeo

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tion and complaints, and then told them they had no case, and that it was his intention to uphold in all things the authority of Cardinal Borromeo.

They returned to Milan discontented, discomfited, and powerless.

During Lent Charles visited Brescia. He returned to Milan in Holy Week, and visited the Governor, hoping that this time of penance and of mourning would soften his heart and cause him to repent.

D'Ayamonte listened quietly to the Cardinal's exhortations, even thanked him, and then remarked with a covert sneer, raising his eyes to heaven: "It is unbearable that we in Milan should not enjoy the liberty possessed by every other city in Italy, and that we cannot be permitted to act as they do."

Charles sighed and took his leave, inwardly praying that God would touch the heart of this proud and obdurate man.

His prayers were heard, but not as he intended; for the Governor fell dangerously ill, and in his last agony he repented, imploring his attendants to send for his quondam foe.

The Cardinal had returned to Brescia after Easter, but no sooner did he hear of D'Ayamonte's serious illness, than, as he himself says, he flew to Milan, hoping to be in time to assist at the last moments of the Governor.

He found him at the point of death, speechless,

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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but conscious. Charles remained with him for four hours, gave him absolution, consoled him, exhorting him to have confidence in the mercy of God, painting for him in glowing colours the joys of Paradise.

At the last awful moment Charles read aloud to him the Gospel of the Passion of our Lord, and at the words, *Et inclinato capite tradidit spiritum*, the soul of D'Ayamonte passed peacefully away.

The Cardinal superintended the arrangements for the funeral, presided at it pontifically, comforted the widow and orphans, and once more proved, as formerly in the case of Don Luis de Requesens, that his was the "charity that suffereth long, and is kind; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

A friend and admirer of our saint, Don Sancho di Guevara Padiglia, was appointed Governor *pro tem*. Everyone was pleased; the good citizens thought the millennium had come, and that in future the lamb and the wolf would lie down together. But the wolf was no sooner in possession of supreme power than he showed his teeth. In other words, Don Sancho acted in the same arrogant and despotic manner as his predecessors, and had scarcely tasted the sweets of power when he used that power to molest his former friend. He would not permit the ecclesiastical tribunals to proceed against laymen for offences against the canon law.

He forbade the Archbishop and his clergy to

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## The Minister of Charles Borromeo

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visit the public hospital, and he started the usual round of jousts, games, and diversions, during the hours of Divine service. He insisted that the members of the Confraternity of the Misericordia should walk in the different processions with uncovered faces, threatening to imprison them if they disobeyed.

Things had come to such a pass that Charles saw there was but one course open for him—a direct appeal to Philip II., King of Spain, and Sovereign of the Duchy of Milan.

The Cardinal had for some time intended doing so, and had looked round for a suitable envoy. His choice fell on a Barnabite priest, Father Charles Bascapè, a learned and prudent man, who afterwards became Bishop of Novara. This good priest arrived at Badajoz in Castile, on the borders of Portugal, on August 4, 1580. The King was engaged there in carrying on a war against the Portuguese, and, as he was much occupied, Father Bascapè had some difficulty in obtaining an audience.

When Philip understood that he came on a mission from Cardinal Borromeo, he received him very graciously, and accepted with singular piety and gratitude the little reliquary containing relics of the Holy Innocents sent him by Charles. He listened attentively to Father Bascapè, telling him he would consult his confessor—a saintly and wise Dominican, Father Diego Clavesio.

Father Diego recommended him to appoint a



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## St. Charles Borromeo

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Governor who would be willing to submit to the Cardinal's decrees. Philip consented; he wrote the following kind and appreciative letter to Charles :

*“ Don Philip, by the grace of God, King of Spain, of Sicily, of Jerusalem, etc.*

“ MOST REVEREND FATHER IN JESUS CHRIST, Cardinal Archbishop of Milan, and our dearest beloved Friend,—I have read your letter of May 15, and I have listened to the Religious sent by you to me, and I have studied the *memoriale* which he gave me from you, and which clearly shows your zeal for religion and your sincere piety. The perusal of it afforded us great satisfaction. Please God we shall soon be able to put an end to all unpleasantness, and bring matters to a satisfactory conclusion. I have given instructions to my Ministers to put an end to the blasphemies, plays, and other public disorders, that offend Almighty God. I leave you free to act as you please in the other matters you mention, only imploring you to be prudent and moderate; in order to obtain good results, one must use the means that are most likely to influence people.

“ I thank you for the blessed relics you so kindly sent me, not only because of their intrinsic value, being as they are worthy of reverence and veneration, but also because I appreciate your thoughtful kindness in sending them to me. May our Lord

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## The Minister of Charles Borromeo

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Jesus Christ ever guard and protect you, our dearest friend !

“BADAJOZ, *October 24, 1580.*”

When the Cardinal received this cordial letter, he remarked to his future biographer, Giussiano :

“I have a piece of good news for you, for which we must thank God, for we shall have peace at last ; the King intends sending a Governor who will agree with me in everything.”

As a matter of fact, Father Bascapè had succeeded all along the line. The King sent Alcanisio to Rome to make a thorough investigation of the disputed points, with the result that he told Monsignor Speciano to write to Cardinal Borromeo to tell him that, if he wished, he could have the entire administration of temporal as well as ecclesiastical power, for the King and his Ministers held the highest opinion of him.

From that day peace, love, and harmony, reigned in Milan. No one opposed the Cardinal ; he was the real ruler, everyone said :

“We must obey the Archbishop ; the King wishes it ; we are forbidden to contest his authority. The time of struggle is past ; he must be obeyed.”

So great was the change that Monsignor Speciano wrote to the Cardinal on May 16, 1581 :

“Alcanisio tells me that all depends on you, not only in Milan, but in Naples and in Sicily. He says that the King’s Ministers esteem and reverence you even more than the King does, and they are

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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convinced that His Majesty has more confidence in you than in anyone. Indeed, he has such an exalted opinion of you that they say he intends to consult you about all ecclesiastical appointments."

When, in 1583, Philip appointed Don d'Arragona, Duke of Tierranueva, Governor of Milan, he said to him : " Go quickly to Milan, but remember you are to consider yourself much more the minister of Charles Borromeo than Governor of Milan. He is the defender of our realm. In re-kindling in the hearts of our people the love of religion, he has made it unnecessary for us to employ soldiers to preserve tranquillity ; for he, in making them religious and devout, has caused them to become loyal subjects."

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### *APOSTOLIC VISITATIONS—THE BRIGANDS*

WHEN in Rome, Charles had suggested to Gregory XIII. that a judicious and efficacious means of firmly establishing the decrees of the Council of Trent would be for the Bishops to visit each other's dioceses and report thereon. The Sovereign Pontiff approved, and appointed Charles Visitor Apostolic of all the dioceses of Lombardy, with, at his own request, the exception of his own see.

The Archbishop visited Brescia, Bergamo, Cremona—in fact, all the dioceses—during 1580-81, reforming, exhorting, preaching, converting; in short, sowing the good seed generously, and in nothing seeking or sparing himself.

At this time the country round Brescia was ravaged by four companies of banditti. These fierce and reckless brigands were the terror of the respectable and law-abiding inhabitants, and what made them most dangerous was the fact that their chiefs were men of noble birth, who for various reasons had become outlaws.

They were Bertazzoli de Salo, Sala d'Asola, Ottavio d'Avogadro, and Don Clerici. These

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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wild and desperate men were the leaders of wild and desperate bands ; they were the scourge of the country, keeping up a predatory warfare, and committing deeds of violence and rapine.

Charles heard of them, and resolved to endeavour to convert them. He sent them word that he greatly desired to interview them, and see for himself what manner of men they were. One band, commanded by Count d' Ottavio d' Avogradro, accepted his invitation, and were so touched by his gentleness and charity that they declared they were willing to change their lives. They implored him to allow them to assist at his Mass on the following morning. Charles was only too pleased to grant them this favour, stipulating, however, that they should come unarmed.

To show his agreement with this wish, the Count laid his arquebuse on the floor at the Cardinal's feet.

At Martinego our saint found himself in the very den of the robbers ; for, halting at an inn outside the town, he discovered to his great joy that it was crowded from cellar to garret with banditti. Here was a chance for the reforming Cardinal. Full of holy zeal and charity, he spent the whole night with these men, exhorting them to repentance. He succeeded in melting their hard hearts, for each and all confessed to him, received absolution, and the following morning were present at the Divine Sacrifice. We can imagine with what grateful fervour and seraphic

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## Apostolic Visitations

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love he offered up Mass for these fierce brands he had with God's help snatched from the burning.

He gave them letters of recommendation to the Provost and Archdeacon of Cremona, hoping in this way to help them to keep their good resolutions. They persevered, these brave but hitherto misguided men; strife and conflict ceased; there were no more robberies; peace reigned throughout the land. And this most desirable state of affairs had been brought about by the kindness and sweet reasonableness of the man who was by so many considered stern and despotic. It was only in defence of the liberties of Holy Church that Charles was inflexible and rigid; when She was not threatened, his true nature showed from behind the mask of severity, and those who came in contact with him, whether rich or poor, saints or sinners, felt irresistibly compelled to give frank, spontaneous admiration to the heroic and noble qualities that made his strong personality so irresistibly attractive.

We have seen him with ruthless, lawless brigands, changing and transforming them by the magic of his eloquence and zeal into good and pious citizens; we will follow his exalted figure to another and very different meeting. It was at Chatillon delle Stiviere, near Asola, that the ascetic and prematurely aged Cardinal met Aloysius, the young angelic son of the Marquis di Gonzaga.

The lad was then only twelve, but already was



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## St. Charles Borromeo

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a child-saint—one whose pure soul had never been, never was to be, tarnished by the least imperfection. It was the zealous, daring reformer who gave Holy Communion for the first time to this flower of innocence, and those who witnessed never forgot the heavenly scene—the austere yet kindly Archbishop, bending over and giving the Bread of Life to the kneeling boy. The faces of both were transfigured, shining with celestial joy, the flames of Divine love seeming to envelop them and separate them from ordinary mortals.

This candid and holy youth afterwards entered the Society of Jesus, was one of the most humble of its members, a mirror of obedience and mortification, and, above all, of purity, and is venerated by us as St. Aloysius Gonzaga.

Charles proceeded on his visitations, going through the country, doing good and bringing comfort and peace to many weary souls. He returned to Milan for a short time to receive the Empress Mary of Austria, who was on her way to Portugal, having been asked by her brother, King Philip II., to govern that country. Having given her the welcome due as much to her virtue and merit as to her exalted rank, he went to Vercelli on a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Eusebius, whose relics had lately been discovered by the Bishop of that city, and the translation of them to a fitting sanctuary was a holy and glorious spectacle, one which rejoiced the reverent and devout soul of our saint.

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## Apostolic Visitations

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From Vercelli he went to Masino, where he met his spiritual son, Charles Emmanuel, who had succeeded his father as Duke of Savoy, and went with him to Turin to gratify once more his devotion to the sacred Passion of Christ by venerating the Holy Winding-Sheet.

Charles returned to Brescia. It was a vast diocese, and to visit it thoroughly took a long time and many journeys to and fro. It extended into wild and unfrequented districts bordering on the Tyrol. It was always difficult, generally dangerous, to cross the mountain passes and to venture among the fierce and brutal inhabitants.

The courageous reformer had in a marked degree "the will to do, the soul to dare," and he went with unruffled calmness into the midst of the most turbulent men. With his gentle, dignified manner, his ardent charity, and his fervid eloquence, he won their hearts and converted them, even as he had the lawless brigands, into honest, God-fearing men.

At Gardono he raised the rough and ignorant miners from the state of degradation into which they had fallen. At Camonica he converted the population *en masse*, and effected some very necessary reforms among the pastors of these poor neglected sheep.

At Tirano he was warmly welcomed, even the Calvinists sharing the enthusiasm of the inhabitants, and going forth with their Catholic neighbours to greet their illustrious visitor. They

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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listened to his discourses, they assisted at Holy Mass, and many abjured their errors and were received by him into the true Church.

In the church at Tirano there is a miraculous image of our Lady, and Charles frequently spent the night kneeling before it in fervent prayer.

These long vigils appealed to the heretics almost as much as his persuasive and soul-stirring sermons. Example is always more efficacious than precept, and these long hours spent in a cold and deserted church, in supplication before the statue of our beloved Mother, made them realize the heroic self-forgetfulness and extraordinary sanctity of the dauntless champion of the Catholic Faith.

Another manifestation of his complex character succeeded in quite winning their hearts. They saw him help with money and advice their poor starving brethren, spend precious hours instructing the rude peasants he met on the highway, and on one occasion he made a long detour in order to teach a little stupid, half-witted boy to bless himself and to recite the "Our Father" and "Hail Mary." The lad was dull and clownish, but the great Cardinal's patience never gave way; he persevered until success crowned his efforts, taking infinite pains to teach one miserable little gamin, showing thus that he followed St. Ignatius's maxim that what is worth doing is worth doing well.

It is these apparently trivial things that show a man's true nature. "That best portion of a good man's life: his little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and of love."

## CHAPTER XXIX

### *PASSING CLOUDS*

PHILIP NERI and Charles Borromeo had been friends for many years. Their mutual affection and veneration were so great that, as we have seen, they were bound together in a holy love resembling that of David and Jonathan. Very pleasant had this friendship been to them; they had encouraged, consoled, advised, and occasionally generously treated each other to spiritual alms, generally given in a half-jesting manner, but always received with profound gratitude. Now a little cloud arose that threatened to diminish somewhat the harmony that had hitherto marked their intercourse.

In 1581, Duke William of Bavaria asked the reforming Cardinal to arrange that everything defective and wrong in the carrying out of Divine service in his dominions should be set right.

Accordingly, Charles entreated Gregory XIII. to send two priests versed in the sacred ceremonies to that country. The Pope selected two priests of the Oratory of San Girolamo, and Charles at once jumped to the conclusion that they were sons of St. Philip. He was delighted, and wrote

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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expressing his gratification at this appointment, mentioning that the Duke also was well pleased.

The priests, however, felt unable to undertake so long a journey ; their courage failed, and they absolutely refused to go to Bavaria.

Charles was grievously disappointed, and he wrote to Philip, telling him he could not have believed it possible that Fathers of the Oratory would so shirk their plain duty, actually disobeying the Sovereign Pontiff.

Philip replied as follows : "The Pope sent me a note yesterday, written by you, in which you show that you are displeased with us, believing that two of our Fathers had promised to go to Bavaria, and afterwards refused to go, thus disobeying the commands of the Pope. Therefore I write to you with the same frankness that you yourself always use, to clear up this matter and to let you know the truth. The two priests are not members of our congregation, but chaplains of the Confraternity of Charity at San Girolamo, and are not connected with us. . . . We are incapable of such contumacy. . . . Were it otherwise, we should consider ourselves guilty of grievous error and sin, from which we pray God always to deliver us. . . . We entreat you to pray for us, and if at any time you hear of anything, either in me or in any of our Fathers, that requires correction, I beg of you yourself to perform this act of charity towards us, and we will accept such correction as a great favour.—June 15, 1581."

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## Passing Clouds

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Not content with writing this explanation, Philip sent a certificate, signed by the two priests of San Girolamo, testifying that there was no connection between their confraternity and the Oratory, and that Philip had nothing to do with their refusal to go to Bavaria. This proceeding deeply wounded Charles; he wrote to Philip the following letter of reproach:

“Assuredly I did not require the formal certificate of the two priests to convince me they did not belong to your congregation. Your word was enough. This is inordinate affection towards your own congregation. Probably you justify it to yourself, but it is a matter on which I have something to say to you, and I will gladly say it when we meet. In the meantime I commend myself to your prayers.”

Previous to the Bavarian episode there had been—for a very short time, however—a slight coolness between them. Philip had recalled his sons from Milan a short time before the plague broke out, and while it raged Charles had written to Monsignor Speciano, expressing his regret that they had been removed when they would have been most useful, and hoping that Philip would send them back again. Philip declined to do so, and a correspondence ensued on the re-establishment of the Oratory at Milan.

Charles was annoyed at the time, that Philip had taken them away when their services were most required, and sometimes half playfully



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## St. Charles Borromeo

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remarked "that Philip was a man without compassion."

Then they had differed on the subject of the rite to be used by the Oratorians in Milan, their founder insisting that they should use the Roman Rite, and Charles declaring that when in Milan they should do as the Milanese did, and follow the Ambrosian Rite.

They had also had several discussions over San Simone, the house assigned to them, the Fathers of the Oratory thinking it too far away from the centre of the city; while the Archbishop had at the time no other convent to give them, but he was most desirous that they should settle in his diocese. He accordingly wrote to Monsignor Speciano: "I shall have much pleasure in seeing those Fathers from San Girolamo, who are come to San Simone in Milan, particularly the one you praise so highly, and all my clergy and attendants will make much of them. I don't want the same thing to happen to them that happened to that father who came with Mezzabarba without his *celebret*, and whom I could not permit to offer up the Divine Sacrifice. In case Father Philip does not care for San Simone, as you hint, I will look out for some other place for them, for I acknowledge that San Simone is rather out of the way." But soon afterwards the Oratorians left San Simone, and quitted Milan for good; nor did they return there until both Philip and Charles were canonized saints.



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## Passing Clouds

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In 1582 these two holy men met again in Rome and discoursed on many things, with much joy and pleasure in each other's society, and with great spiritual profit to their souls; for it seemed as though all these little differences of opinion had only strengthened their mutual veneration and affection.

The cloud was quickly dispelled, the little rift within the lute failed to make the music mute, and the friends continued to love and esteem each other, the marked differences in their characters only binding them more closely together. "Their hearts were of each other sure."

"It is the secret sympathy,  
The silver link, the silken tie,  
Which heart to heart and mind to mind  
In body and in soul can bind."

A common sorrow soon drew them yet closer together. On Sunday, April 25, 1582, the dearly loved sister of Charles, Princess Anna of Colonna, fell asleep in Jesus.

She had been for years the docile, fervent penitent of Philip, and he had led her through thorny paths to a high degree of perfection. Both men felt her loss, for she was inexpressibly dear to them. It was, however, a source of pure joy to them to know that her last moments had been peaceful and happy.

Father Fabrizio, S.J., describes her death as follows: "When Anna was dying, everything about her breathed the holiest Christian per-

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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fection, but the greatest holiness was in her soul. She was apparently set free, not only from bodily miseries, but also from the scruples that had troubled her during life. She went forth to meet her heavenly Bridegroom with ineffable love, with great humility and self-distrust, but with perfect confidence in Him; so with ardent affections towards God, in the full light of the Holy Spirit, not cast down by pain, she went to take her place amongst those who have washed their robes in the blood of the Saviour."

On May 4, 1582, Charles wrote to his friend the Duke of Tuscany as follows: "Her death was as edifying and as glorious as her life. . . . Death must open the gates of eternal life to one whose life was a death in life. She is gone to receive the reward exceeding great, promised to those who work and suffer in this life. Never have I felt so profound a sorrow; my heart is cleft in twain, and I can never sufficiently venerate her remains or honour her noble deeds. Our family owe her everlasting gratitude, for she has embellished it by her virtues and helped us by her example. Her loss causes us poignant anguish, but we must endeavour to hush the sorrowful throbbings of our hearts and be resigned to the Divine will. . . . When we think over all the circumstances of her death, we must gratefully acknowledge that we have to thank God from our hearts for having dealt so graciously with His good and faithful handmaid."

## CHAPTER XXX

### *THE CARDINAL OF SANTA PRASSEDE*

IN 1582 Charles journeyed for the last time to the Eternal City. It was three years since his previous visit, and, in accordance with ecclesiastical observances, it was his duty to go there to give an account of his diocese and to pray at the tombs of the holy Apostles.

Before starting, however, he wrote to ask the permission of Cesare Gambara of Tortona, the oldest prelate in the province. He did so in order to obey to the letter the regulations of the Council of Trent.

He intended setting out early in October, but, as he wrote to Monsignor Speciano, "We often decide to do things, but Almighty God compels us to change our plans. The death of the Princess Malfetta caused me to start sooner than I intended. As I am thus already *en route*, I think it more advisable to continue my journey than to return to Milan, particularly as I can quite easily wind up certain affairs from here which I was unable to finish before leaving Milan. . . . I proposed going by sea to Ancona, but I have changed my mind. . . . I prefer to go in a litter, as that mode of

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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travelling is more conducive to contemplation, and enables one to meditate better on sacred subjects. I am staying with the Capuchins of Sabbionetta, and I enjoy a delightful solitude, and am able quietly to attend to various business matters."

The Archbishop remained in this blessed retreat until the end of September, praying, meditating, and practising such severe mortifications that the strict life of the Franciscans appeared light and easy, almost sensual, in comparison with his rigorous austerities.

On October 24, 1582, Charles Borromeo arrived in Rome, and at once took up his abode in the house close to his beloved and titular church of Santa Prassede. On October 30 his friend Giulio Ornato wrote to Milan as follows: "I pass over in silence the honours, caresses, favours, gorgeous receptions, and a thousand other things, with which we were overwhelmed at Mantua, Bologna, Florence—in fact, at all our halting-places. On Tuesday morning our illustrious Cardinal and master went to the Villa to kiss the Pope's feet. He spent four days there, was most graciously welcomed, and was never refused an audience. Yesterday afternoon the Sovereign Pontiff and the Court returned to Rome, the Holy Father visited the seven basilicas, and our Cardinal accompanied him."

The Pope wished Charles to take a more important title than that of Cardinal of Santa Prassede, urging him to take that of Santa Maria

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## The Cardinal of Santa Prassede

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di Trastevere, telling him that not only was it a sacred spot, as it was the first church consecrated to the Blessed Virgin, but that also it was nearer the Vatican, and the air was purer and more invigorating; and, then, he would be able to make about 200 scudi a year by letting the magnificent and vast gardens.

The Cardinal replied: "I prefer my own title of Santa Prassede, because I so deeply reverence the sacred relics in that holy church. A busy man finds the air pure and invigorating everywhere; and as for the 200 scudi, they will be just as useful to any other Cardinal."

He loved this titular church of his dearly, as he said, on account of the many sacred relics it contained, but particularly because it held that priceless treasure, the Column to which our Redeemer was bound. Before this heart-stirring memorial of our Saviour's love for us, Charles spent long hours in prayer and meditation. In it are also preserved a portion of the Crown of Thorns and the Sponge, and a few tresses of our Lady's hair.

In the sacristy there is a splendid picture by Guido Romano of the Flagellation, and a miniature portrait of our Lord, said to have belonged to St. Peter, and to have been given by him to Santa Prassede. Certainly this Church of Peace is rich in relics of our Saviour's Passion, and no wonder that the man who loved with a surpassing love his Crucified Master would not give up for

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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the wealthiest and most magnificent basilica this humble temple dedicated to a humble maiden, that yet, humble as it was, held treasures inexpressibly dear to his and to our hearts.

Father Lucien de Florence, a monk at the monastery of Santa Prassede, gives us a vivid and interesting account of the life Charles led during his stay in Rome in 1582.

"The holy Cardinal," he writes, "has selected for his particular use a small chair; on this he sleeps for about three hours every night; he has quite given up going to bed. The rest of the night he spends in meditation; then he recites Matins, kneeling uncovered. He often spends the whole night in the crypt under the high-altar, in prayer before the precious relics preserved there. Neither the extreme cold nor the dampness of the place can turn him aside from this way of living, which is more that of an angel than a man. At daybreak he celebrates Holy Mass; the Spanish Ambassador, Count Olivarez, and his wife, are generally present. The severity of the weather and the very early hour prevents not a number of noble ladies and other distinguished people from attending. Count Olivarez says our Cardinal is more like an angel than a man."

It is a strange fact that Charles, who during the greater part of his life slept daily only for three or four hours, was naturally inclined to drowsiness. He tells us that he could never quite master this inclination, and that it was always with the



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## The Cardinal of Santa Prassede

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greatest difficulty he woke up. Probably that is why he slept on a chair, dreading that, if he were reposing in a comfortable bed, he would not get up at a sufficiently early hour. People remonstrated with him for giving such a short time to rest, and to these kind friends he generally replied: "My uncle Giacompo de' Medici, who is a soldier, never undresses, and always sleeps on a chair, so that he may be ready to fight at a moment's notice; and if the soldier of an earthly Sovereign is so watchful, surely a soldier of the Cross, and particularly a Bishop, should be as vigilant: for to us pastors of Christ are entrusted the care of souls, and we have to wage constant war against the world, the flesh, and the devil."

On another occasion a pious director told him that everyone should have seven hours' sleep. "A Bishop," he replied, "must be an exception to this rule."

The Cardinal of the Church of Peace was invariably so calm and recollected that people sometimes thought he slept. In particular, he generally remained perfectly motionless while listening to sermons, his eyes closed, and his whole appearance resembling one who was either dead or in a restful slumber. One day at devotions in Rome, a Bishop noticed that, while Father Francis Toledo was preaching, Charles Borromeo was apparently enjoying a pleasant nap. He remarked later on to a friend: "Cardinal Borromeo's confessor ought to give him as a penance

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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to stop longer in bed, in order that he may keep awake during the day, and particularly during sermons."

The person addressed dined that day with Charles, and was greatly surprised, and somewhat amused, to hear him repeat almost word for word Father Toledo's discourse.

During this his last visit to Rome, Charles brought to a high degree of perfection the Congregation of Priests *delle Provincie Lombarde*, which he had founded some time previously in imitation of the Vatican Nights.

This confraternity met in the Church of St. Ambrose in the Corso, and was composed principally of prelates and clergymen from Lombardy. Their object was to form a school of eloquent and learned preachers. Every Sunday they had spiritual exercises, consisting of sermons interspersed with prayers and music; for Charles always believed in the power of music, both instrumental and vocal, to stir the heart with high and noble emotions, and to raise it above this world to the contemplation of heavenly joys.

"There is in souls a sympathy with sounds ;  
And as the mind is pitched, the ear is pleased  
With melting airs or martial, brisk or gay.  
Some chord in unison with what we hear  
Is touched within us, and the heart replies."

Charles was also the originator of the Congregation of Rites, although on his return to his diocese the brunt of the work fell upon his friend Cardinal Paleotti, and later on upon Cardinal Caraffa. Yet

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## The Cardinal of Santa Prassede

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they unanimously agreed that, while he lived, Charles was the life and soul of the work. It was not, however, until some years after his death that the Congregation of Rites received the Papal sanction, during the pontificate of Sixtus V.

Gregory XIII., who, as we know, held him in high esteem, confided to him the important mission of establishing peace and concord among the numerous branches of the Franciscan Order. The Cardinal of Santa Prassede had been their protector, and was ever their loyal and devoted friend, cherishing with a very special affection the memory of their seraphic founder. He therefore undertook this troublesome task with alacrity, and, with his usual prudence and tact, soon brought matters to a satisfactory issue, helping to restore to the numerous members their love of poverty and of obedience with their pristine fervour.

The Order of the Knights of Malta and of St. John of Jerusalem had greatly deteriorated; the reforming Cardinal undertook their reform with unabated vigour and zeal, and success once more crowned his efforts.

He spent his time in Rome in bringing to a satisfactory conclusion many other difficult and important works, the Pope invariably entrusting to him the conduct of the most difficult and intricate affairs.

Gregory not only loved and esteemed, but also appears to have been considerably in awe of the stern ascetic. On one occasion, when the Pope

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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and several of the Cardinals were amusing themselves in the groves of the Vatican, watching horses being exercised, an attendant announced that Cardinal Borromeo was approaching. "Let us hasten away," cried the Pope. "If Cardinal Borromeo finds us diverting ourselves here, he will say we are wasting our time."

At any rate, the Pope was determined that the Cardinal should not waste his own time, for he gave him so much to do that it was a marvel that he did not break down under the constant strain.

However, the Sovereign Pontiff generously repaid him in the way he liked best, by giving him, on his departure for Milan, several briefs and diplomas conferring many favours and privileges on his clergy and people. Amongst others he gave him the right to absolve—"a quibuscumque peccatis, et censuris, etiam in cœna Domini, et remittendi in totum, vel in partem pœnam incursam super irregularitatibus in utroque foro, etiam ex homicidio voluntario, quoscumque tam laicos, quam clericos, et regulares Civitatis Diœcesis, et Provinciæ Mediol. per se, vel per alium cum eisque dispensandi super qualibet indebita perceptione fructuum, ac pœnas incursas, et debita remittendi et condonandi."

Armed with these privileges and powers, also with the brief appointing him Apostolic Visitor of all Switzerland, Charles set out for Milan early in January, 1683. He wrote from Spoleto to his vicar :

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## The Cardinal of Santa Prassede

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"We shall not arrive for some time, for the Pope has commissioned us to arrange several important affairs. We shall therefore be compelled to make frequent halts."

One of the affairs confided to Charles was the very trying one of examining into the rights and wrongs of the marriage contracted between Vincenzo di Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua, and Margheretta Farnese, daughter of the Duke of Parma.

This union was finally declared null and void, and the bride became the spouse of Christ. She entered the Convent of St. Paul at Mantua, and received the habit from the hands of Charles Borromeo on October 30, 1583.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### *THE ONLY WAY*

IN July, 1583, Charles travelled on and by the shores of Lago Maggiore. The Rocca d' Arona had been restored to him by Philip, but we do not hear that he visited it. It was to Ascona he bent his steps, to lay the foundation-stone of a college. A wealthy inhabitant bequeathed his fortune to the Sovereign Pontiff for that purpose, and Gregory put the matter absolutely in the capable hands of the reforming Cardinal. Accordingly he laid the foundation-stone, the building got on quickly, and was finished within the year. While at Ascona, Charles heard that the plague had broken out in the neighbouring village of Brissago. He flew there on the wings of self-forgetting charity, and remained until the scourge had passed away. He nursed and consoled the poor sick people, administered the Sacraments, and gave such liberal alms that he left himself completely penniless, and he was compelled to borrow money to enable him to return to Milan.

Early in September, 1583, Charles Emmanuel, Duke of Savoy, fell dangerously ill. He at once



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## The Only Way

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sent for his spiritual father, entreating him to come without delay. Charles set out at once. Travelling day and night, he reached Novara so exhausted that the Bishop of that city implored him to rest, or at any rate to travel in a carriage. Charles at first refused, then accepted; but the carriage was upset, and eventually he continued his journey on horseback. Varied and unpleasant were the adventures he met with riding through the rough country roads, but he finally arrived at Vercelli, and hastened to the sick-room.

When the illustrious patient saw his beloved Father beside his bed, he cried, "I am cured!" It was quite true; the mere presence of the saint effected that which the physicians, with all their science, had failed to accomplish. They had abandoned hope, declaring the Prince could not recover. Behold, in an instant he regained perfect health: "*recupero in un tratto la sanità.*" Giovanni Botero, an eyewitness, deposed to this miraculous recovery at the process of the canonization.

Charles Emmanuel himself was so certain that he owed his wonderful cure to the Cardinal, that a few years after the saint's death, to show his gratitude and veneration, he sent an attested certificate to Milan, with a magnificent silver chandelier, and a thousand pistoles to be spent in keeping eleven candles continually burning in front of Charles's tomb.

"We shall ever proclaim," he writes, "that it

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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was through the intercession of the illustrious Cardinal Borromeo we were restored to health."

Charles gave Holy Communion to the Prince. As he did so, he addressed him in a most touching manner, calling on him to return thanks to God, and recited with great fervour the psalm of the penitent King: "The Lord hath reigned: He is clothed with beauty: the Lord is clothed with strength, and hath girded Himself. . . . Thy testimonies are made exceedingly credible: holiness becometh Thine house, O Lord, unto length of days."

In accordance with the Cardinal's wish, public devotions were held in the city, and the people gave fervent thanks to God for the miraculous restoration to health of their beloved Prince, and greeted the Cardinal with joyous acclamations, crying: "It is he, the faithful servant of the Lord, who has worked the miracle."

In the evening Charles set out on his homeward journey. He arrived at Milan in time to officiate pontifically on the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin. In a moving discourse he related the object and the happy result of his journey.

The Archbishop invariably preached at the Mass he celebrated, standing in front of the altar instead of mounting the pulpit. His reasons for doing so he explains with his usual clearness and simplicity in a letter to his former vicar, Monsignor Ormanetto. "I cannot make up my mind,"

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## The Only Way

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he writes, "to follow your advice and preach from the pulpit ; in fact, the more I think it over, the less I like it. To preach from the pulpit requires not only a powerful voice and much declamatory eloquence ; one must prepare the discourse with great care. I have not either the means or the time to do so. Speaking from before the altar all one says appears good and to the point, and I need only prepare my homily on the previous evening. I find this way best, because I have resolved, according to the rules of our liturgy, to preach at all the pontifical Masses.

"In ordaining that the Bishop, robed in magnificent vestments, should preach after the first Gospel, the idea of the Church evidently was to inspire awe and reverence in the congregation. It gives an added majesty and authority to my words to speak in this manner, surrounded by my priests, also robed in sacred vestments."

Charles had the gift of touching even the hardest hearts, although he had not an eloquent or flowing style, and generally spoke in the simplest way, using only ordinary words and never indulging in flowers of rhetoric.

An intimate friend of his, Father Galliardi, S.J., describes his style as follows : "I have frequently reflected that Cardinal Borromeo was not by nature endowed with eloquence ; on the contrary, he spoke quietly and slowly, and used few words . . . nevertheless with these few words—and these often spoken so low that they were scarcely

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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audible—I have known him not merely touch, but absolutely change, the hearts of those he addressed, persuading them to do what he wished even in most important matters.”

In the autumn of 1583 Charles required all his powers of persuasion to effect any good in the colossal task that lay before him.

The Pope had appointed him, as we know, Apostolic Visitor of all Switzerland, and it was in October, 1583, that he crossed the Alps in order to commence this arduous undertaking. Parts of Switzerland were not only heretical, they were far worse; for the inhabitants of some of the valleys were sunk in a state of moral degradation too horrible to describe. Suffice it to say that magic and sorcery were practised in an unthinkable, unspeakable manner. Not only were the people given over to these devilish practices, but at Roveredo, in the Mesolcine Valley, the parish priest was actually the leader of the hellish crew.

All Charles's prayers and exhortations failed to touch the heart of this miserable wretch; he continued obstinate and unrepentant, and even the tears and supplications of a saint were unavailing; he would not abandon his infamous practices. Charles was reluctantly compelled to degrade him from his sacred office, and to hand him over to the secular authority. He was punished for his unspeakable crimes by the flaming death that in those days was the penalty for sorcery.

Charles wrote to the Bishop of Coire as follows :

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## The Only Way

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“Neque desunt qui affirmant (horror sit religiosis auribus!) eum sacrificantis veste indutum, et manu tenentem sacrum Chrisma impurissime saltasse. Sacris operabatur quotidie, afferens ad aram impudicas ex nocturnis domestici scorti complexibus manus . . . profanos calices in usum sacrorum instituit.”

There were also a hundred and fifty women who practised the black art, and by the grace of God Charles succeeded in converting a hundred and thirty-nine of these poor creatures. They acknowledged their abominable crimes, and begged forgiveness. Eleven remained obdurate, and these were seized by the civil authority and condemned to be burnt alive. In vain the saintly Archbishop prayed and wept over them, imploring them to repent before it was too late. They refused to listen to him, and he was obliged to return to Bellinzona, and leave them to their awful doom.

He commissioned Father Stoppani and two other priests to remain with them until the end, hoping against hope that at the last terrible moment they would repent, and although their bodies would be burned, yet their souls would be saved. His prayers were heard, for before the fatal moment arrived they repented, confessed their sins, and received absolution and Holy Communion. Four of the poor creatures were burned on the 1st of December, four more on the 5th, and the remaining three on the 13th.

Father Stoppani and two other priests on each

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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occasion gave them the last absolution. As the devouring flames enveloped them they cried aloud in agony, "Jesus! Jesus! Misericordia, Jesus! Jesus!" Father Stoppani wrote to Charles that he had every hope that these unfortunate creatures had won salvation.

The following extract from a letter from Father Charles to the Cardinal gives a vivid description of the dreadful scene :

"There was a pile of faggots collected in a square, and the women were placed upon a platform bound with cords, their faces turned towards the wood. The heat and roar of the flames were so terrific that flesh and bones alike were reduced to ashes. They confessed their crimes, and I gave them the final absolution, while Father Stoppani and two priests encouraged and comforted them. I am quite unable to describe their sorrow and repentance; they underwent their terrible punishment with resignation. Before they were brought to the place of execution, they confessed their sins and received Holy Communion. They acknowledged they deserved death, and with signs of sincere repentance consecrated themselves to Christ. They wore rosaries round their necks.

"The crowd was great, and all assembled in that vast space cried aloud the Holy Name; and the unfortunate women echoed their cries, calling 'Jesus! Jesus!' from the midst of the flames."

To us in our enlightened twentieth century this terrible doom—the flaming death—seems a des-



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## The Only Way

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perate remedy for witchcraft, but in the sixteenth century it was generally regarded as a fitting penalty. Only by these appalling means could the land be cleared from sorcery ; only thus could the people be freed from the witch's dreaded influence. Kind-hearted, noble, and generous men and women, while they wept over the terrible fate of these miscreants, acknowledged that it was the only way.

## CHAPTER XXXII

*"WHAT WENT YOU OUT TO SEE?"*

"WHAT went you out to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went you out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Behold, they that are in costly apparel, and live delicately, are in the houses of kings" (Luke vii. 24, 25).

Though all sorts and conditions of men went forth to meet Charles as he passed from village to village, yet his progress was not quite a triumphal one.

At Mesolco, the capital of the Mesolcine Valley, his efforts were unavailing; the greater part of the population refused to renounce their errors, and, indeed, threatened, to declare war against Spain if he did not withdraw.

Philip II., Henry III., Charles Emmanuel, gave him their support as far as possible; but the greater part of Switzerland lay outside their jurisdiction, therefore Charles was reluctantly compelled to return once more to Bellinzona. He made this well-disposed and truly Catholic city his headquarters, sending from there Jesuits and Oblates not only into the Mesolcine Valley, but on to Coire. The Grison League was holding

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“What went you out to see?”

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a Diet there, and he sent envoys to explain to them the deplorable condition of the inhabitants of their cantons, and to implore them to permit the people to have worthy pastors to minister to their spiritual necessities, even though these priests were foreigners, and he strongly urged that a law should be passed forbidding the people to give shelter to apostate priests.

Although most of the members of the Diet were either Calvinists or followers of Zuinglius, they received his envoys courteously, and acceded to his request anent the harbouring of apostates; but they refused to allow priests from other lands to undertake the cure of souls. While at Bellinzona, the heretical natives of the Rhenish valleys sent a secret deputation to beg him to visit their cantons, promising that he should be allowed to celebrate the mysteries of religion, administer the Sacraments, and preach in public.

The energetic Cardinal longed to take up his staff and go forth to preach the Gospel to these children who sat in the outer darkness, yet hungered and thirsted for the light; but there were weighty reasons why he could not grant their request, one of the principal being that neither he nor any of his priests could speak German. He, however, treated the envoys with his usual courteous kindness, and promised, as soon as he could possibly manage it, to accede to their wishes.

Christmas was approaching, so he was obliged

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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to return to Milan. Before leaving Bellinzona he sent his confessor, Father Adorno, S.J., and several other Religious, to Chiavenna and the neighbouring villages of the Valtellini. This he did for the comfort and spiritual sustenance of the Catholics of the district, but the Cabinet Ministers swore before the Diet that the reforming Cardinal had not only endeavoured to reform the Faith, but had also tampered with the loyalty of their people. They loudly accused him of trying to induce inhabitants of the Mesolcine and Valtellini Valleys to renounce their allegiance to the Diet and become subjects of the King of Spain.

According to their infamous insinuations, the saintly and high-minded Cardinal was an intriguer and a hypocrite, cloaking his nefarious designs for the extension of the power of his King under the garb of religious enthusiasm and zeal for souls.

The result of the intrigues of the Calvinist ministers was that Father Adorno, S.J., and some of his companions were imprisoned; they, however, were soon released. Early in 1584 Charles held a conference of the arch-priests and visitors of the diocese. He entertained them in the archiepiscopal palace with his usual lavish hospitality; for though he lived himself on water and dried fruits, yet he invariably treated his guests to the very best of everything. Hospitality was one of his favourite virtues, and wherever he was he always practised it in the highest degree.

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“What went you out to see?”

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He was very unwell, suffering from erysipelas in the leg and from other ailments, but the weakness of his body in no way impaired the vigour of his mind. He was compelled to remain in a reclining position, so he lay on a couch in the audience chamber, and transacted the business of the meeting with his usual methodical clearness.

The object of the conference was to inquire how his rules and regulations had been observed in all the parishes of his diocese. He noted down every article, with the answers he received concerning it. In fact, he made a thorough examination into the wants of his diocese, corrected existing abuses, and pointed out to his clergy the surest means to adopt to avoid them in the future.

Having drawn up a memorial, he got it published, and had it ready for the synod he held in the following April. It contains all the necessary rules and counsels for governing parishes, and he gave it to his clergy as his last offering at this his last synod, for he was convinced he had but a short time to live. What most troubled him at this synod was the intelligence he had received that his efforts to convert the Grisons and the other Swiss cantons were not likely to be crowned with success. His clergy sympathized with him, and many of them volunteered to go forth to evangelize these fair lands. But Charles knew the hour had not come. He foresaw that many years would pass before these wandering sheep would

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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be brought into the fold, and that it would be Francis de Sales, not Charles Borromeo, who would preach to them the truths of the Gospel, and have the ineffable joy of converting them from the darkness of heresy.

He grew daily more seraphic and angelic the nearer the hour approached that was to release him from the burden of the flesh. He seemed on fire with Divine love, and his superabundant energy increased to such a degree that people looked upon him as a phenomenon.

During this his last synod he preached several times with marvellous fervour and eloquence. The difficulty of speaking fluently, which he had struggled against more or less all his life, completely disappeared, and he electrified his audience by his burning eloquence.

His biographer, Giussano, describes his soul-stirring discourses in the following vivid words: "The Cardinal spoke with such warmth and zeal that we felt as though ravished into an ecstasy, and we experienced such interior joy that we easily but firmly resolved to change our manner of life, and to devote ourselves heart and soul to the Divine service. As for our saintly Cardinal, he was so inflamed with Divine love that he appeared to be already in Paradise; therefore his words were powerful and effective, and he spoke as one having authority, for it seemed that, as he drew near his end, Almighty God gave him a foretaste of the beatitude that awaited him."



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“What went you out to see?”

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Indeed, his fervour and zeal increased to such a degree that Giussano remarks: “As a candle, ere it dies out, blazes up with greater brilliancy, so the charity and holiness of our beloved Cardinal blazed forth with tenfold splendour, the nearer he drew to death.”

In March he laid the foundation-stone of a magnificent church at Rho, in honour of our Lady. This edifice was to be on a superb scale, but it was not completed during his lifetime.

About the same time he founded a convalescent home for the sick poor to repose in when discharged from the hospital of Milan. This undertaking was also finished by his immediate successor, Gaspar Visconti.

The mere enumeration of all the churches, hospitals, convents, and seminaries, that owe their origin to the reforming Cardinal would fill a volume, and to give a detailed account of each would take a lifetime. How in his short allotted span of forty-six years he contrived to do so much is one of those miracles of superhuman energy and devotion only possible to a great saint. Ordinary mortals must marvel and admire such supernatural power, and certainly can never hope to imitate it. Yet, though we cannot follow the steps of the ascetic Archbishop in works of charity or in deeds of magnitude and heroism, we can strive like him to do little acts of kindness, we can practise the art of saying and doing pleasant things, and by so doing bring sunshine

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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and peace to many world-weary and poverty-stricken souls.

“ We cannot all be heroes,  
And thrill a hemisphere  
With some great, daring venture,  
Some deed that mocks at fear ;  
But we can fill a lifetime  
With kindly acts and true :  
There’s always noble service  
For noble souls to do.”

Charles never considered his own ease or comfort, and was ready to fly off to the succour of the weak and suffering, even when he himself was bowed down with sickness and fever. The following is but one instance of his loving self-forgetfulness :

He had officiated pontifically in the Duomo on the last Sunday in April, 1584, when word was brought him that Giovanni Delfino, Bishop of Brescia, was dying. Fatigued as he was, he immediately set out for that city, travelling day and night in the hope of being in time to comfort and console his suffragan Bishop, and himself administer the last Sacraments. He reached the patient in time to give him Extreme Unction, and Giovanni Delfino passed away having received the last absolution from his beloved Archbishop, who remained beside him until the end.

Charles made all the arrangements for, and officiated at, the funeral, and then returned to Milan, arriving at eight in the morning, in time to celebrate Holy Mass on the Feast of the Exalta-

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“What went you out to see?”

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tion of the Cross. He preached, recited the Divine Office in the Duomo, conducted the Procession of the Holy Nail through the city, and wound up with pontifical Vespers and Compline. His lifelong efforts to suppress King Carnival were crowned with success. During the three weeks that preceded the Lent of 1584, the people, instead of indulging as formerly in profane diversions, devoted the time they had hitherto given to frivolous and often sinful frolics, to the service of God. They heard sermons, they followed holy processions, they listened to the sublime Gregorian chant. They went on pilgrimages from church to church, and they who had been renowned throughout Italy as pleasure-loving and dissipated were transformed into sanctified, devout, charitable Christians.

The reforming Cardinal gave thanks to God for the reform he had at last succeeded in effecting. His efforts had not been in vain; Milan was changed, root and branch; her citizens were the shining lights of Italy, and her Archbishop could say with Simeon: “Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word, in peace.”

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### *HIS HOUSE IN ORDER*

IN the almost unendurable heat of midsummer in the plains of Lombardy, Charles passed from parish to parish on his pastoral visitations.

At Legnano he was surprised to find that there was only one priest to minister to the spiritual needs of a large population. In the neighbouring village of Parabiago there was a collegiate church served by five Canons ; the congregation was small, so Charles considered that under the circumstances he was justified in robbing Peter to pay Paul. He therefore removed four of the Canons to Legnano ; erected a collegiate church there, under a Provost ; appointed a priest to attend to a hamlet where there was a chapel of ease ; and gave Parabiago in charge to two clergymen. He returned to Milan to celebrate the Feast of Our Lady's Nativity, giving his benediction with unutterable fervour and love to his cherished flock. It was the last time he was to officiate in the beautiful Duomo ; most of the congregation looked for the last time—though they knew it not—on the frail, attenuated form and the thoughtful, refined face of their Archbishop. Eyewitnesses relate that, when

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## His House in Order

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he offered up the Holy Sacrifice and blessed the people, his countenance glowed with seraphic joy, and his whole demeanour was instinct with indescribable majesty and dignity: "As the sun when it shineth, so did he shine in the temple of God, when he put on the robe of glory and was crowned with the perfection of power. When he went up to the holy altar he honoured the vesture of holiness."

News was brought him on September 18 that Francesco Bossi, Bishop of Novara, was in his last agony. He accordingly set off at once, but, though he travelled post-haste, he arrived too late. He officiated at the funeral, however. Scarcely was it over, when a messenger arrived from Cardinal Ferrero, announcing that their cousin, the Marquis de Messerano, was dangerously ill. The indefatigable Cardinal immediately proceeded to the castle of the dying noble, administered the last Sacraments, and prepared him for death. The two Cardinals then went on to Vercelli. That city was in a state of unrest; dissensions of various kinds divided the Canons of the Chapter. Matters had reached such a pass that the more peaceable of the citizens feared there would be a riot, and that blood would be shed and bones broken.

The Bishop, Monsignor Giovanni Francesco Bonomi, was away, acting as Nuncio at the Imperial Court. In his absence, Gregory XIII. deputed Charles as Visitor Apostolic, to endeavour

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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to restore concord. Ten days after the arrival of our saint peace was re-established, the warring Canons were reconciled, and they one and all agreed to obey in future the decrees of their Bishop.

Several prelates, hearing that Charles was at Vercelli, visited him there, consulting him on the government of their dioceses, and entreated him to solve several vexed questions. He gave them the benefit of his advice.

Cardinal Borromeo had written to his beloved spiritual son, Charles Emmanuel, to congratulate him on his approaching marriage with the Infanta of Spain. In reply, the Duke sent a most pressing invitation to his dear Father, warmly asking him to come to Turin. It was but a short journey, so Charles agreed. He wished to converse with the Prince and give him salutary advice, but he also passionately longed once again to venerate the Holy Winding-Sheet. He spent a short time at the Court, and had several important interviews, principally on spiritual subjects, with the Duke of Savoy, who wished him to promise to return for the wedding. "My Father, I implore you to come and bless my marriage with the Infanta," the young Prince pleaded. Charles smiled enigmatically, and, when closely pressed to give a decided refusal, remarked dreamily: "Perchance we may never meet again."

On October 8 he left Turin; at Biella he heard that his cousin, the Marquis de Messerano, was

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## His House in Order

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dead. So he hurried to the Castello di Messerano to attend the funeral and comfort the widow.

Having paid this visit of charity, he felt free to go to Varallo to make his annual retreat. He sent for his confessor, Father Adorno, S.J., for he wished to follow the spiritual exercises under the direction of the learned and saintly Jesuit. We know that his devotion to our Lord's Passion had always been great, but during his stay at Varallo it increased to such a degree that he frequently spent hours kneeling before the various mysteries, lost in contemplation, and quite oblivious of the flight of time. On one occasion he spent eight hours in one of the chapels, neither moving nor speaking, his eyes burning with Divine love, fixed with inexpressible tenderness on the image of our Saviour. When Father Adorno at last roused him from this ecstatic meditation, the Cardinal reproached him for interrupting his devotions so soon, and when the Jesuit remarked he had spent eight hours in prayer, Charles replied, smiling: "You have put on the clock."

It is impossible fitly to describe the sublime heights of sanctity to which Charles attained during his last retreat. He made a general confession with sobs and tears; he practised the severest corporal austerities, sleeping on a plank, disciplining himself to blood, taking only bread and water. This had been his daily fare for many years, but now he was so weakened by



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## St. Charles Borromeo

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suffering that his confessor ordered him to partake of more solid food, to have some straw placed on the plank on which he slept, and to moderate his penances. He reluctantly complied, being under obedience; but, compelled to slightly abate his mortifications, he increased daily in humility. Never was anyone so humble and meek as the once haughty Borromeo. He had renounced the "Humilitas," the motto of the House of Borromeo, using only the archiepiscopal seal of Milan, but it was engraved on his heart. All his actions showed the deepest humility, the most profound abjection. He made himself the servant of all, lighting their lamps, calling them in the morning, refusing to allow them to serve him.

On October 18 he set out for Arona, to meet the Cardinal of Vercelli, who wished to consult him on several important matters. He spent a few days there transacting business, stopping at the Jesuit monastery instead of at his own old home, the Rocca d' Arona. On his return to Varallo he was attacked by a tertian fever, and was soon seriously ill. When the fever left him for a few days, he made up for the time he had been obliged to lose, by working with redoubled energy. He had an enormous correspondence, and, as letters requiring immediate answers had accumulated, it was a very fatiguing task to reply to them all. He did not, however, shrink from it. Cardinal Sfondrato required his advice on matters of moment; he returned the letter with

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## His House in Order

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copious marginal notes. He wrote to the Pope strongly recommending to his paternal care and generosity the Jesuit Fathers of the Brera University.

Cardinal Paleotti wished him to publish the treatises he had composed at Sabbionetta on Prayer and on the Art of Meditation. Charles refused, writing that they were not worth printing until they were revised and corrected. These invaluable manuscripts are still in the Ambrosian Library at Milan, and have not yet been published.

When Charles had regained a little strength, he went to Ascona to open the college of which he had laid the foundation-stone about fifteen months previously. He was very anxious to do this, for the founder had willed that it should be in working order within two years of his death.

The plague was raging at Ascona and at Locarno, but this only made Charles more desirous to visit these towns and help the inhabitants. He got so ill, however, that he was compelled to leave and return to Arona. When he arrived there, his cousin, Count Renato Borromeo, vainly entreated him to spend the night at the Rocca. Renato was the elder son of Charles's uncle, Giulio Cesare Borromeo, and the brother of the gentle, angelic Cardinal Frederick Borromeo who was the second successor of our saint in the See of Milan.

Charles turned a deaf ear to his cousin's

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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entreaties, refusing to spend even one night under the paternal roof, and staying instead at the Jesuit monastery. He spent but a few days there, as he wished to arrive in Milan in time to celebrate the Feast of All Saints. In vain Renato urged the beneficial effects sure to ensue from a sojourn in his native place. Charles decided to start at once for Milan; however, he got so ill that he was unable to leave Arona until November 2. He was too weak to offer up the Holy Sacrifice, but he received Holy Communion. Then they carried him to the boat, laying him on a bed provided by Renato, who insisted on his reclining on it. Renato and Father Adorno, S.J., accompanied him on his journey. They sailed across Lago Maggiore, entered the Ticino river, and pursued his journey through the *naviglio*, and so reached the outskirts of Milan.

The dying man was placed in a litter and slowly conveyed to his palace, where he was welcomed by his brother-in-law, Count Annibali Alta Empe, and his nephew. Charles greeted them affectionately, then retired to his oratory, but was soon obliged to take to his bed. In the meanwhile physicians had been sent for. When they arrived and examined the patient, they shook their heads, declaring he was sick unto death. When he heard their sentence, Charles smiled radiantly, saying in rapt accents: "May the most holy will of God be blessed!"

Peace was coming to him at last—the peace





SHRINE OF ST. CHARLES BORROMEO.

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## His House in Order

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that passeth all understanding. He had fought the good fight for many years, and now the victory was almost won. His house was in order, he was at peace with God, with his neighbour, and with himself.

“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, do I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid.”

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### *"ECCE VENIO"*

CHARLES BORROMEO lay on his death-bed. Around him knelt his relations and friends; beside him stood his confessor, Father Adorno, S.J. The Archpriest of Milan gave him the Holy Viaticum. Charles endeavoured to rise to receive his Saviour, but, overcome by fever and pain, he fell back on the pillows. He wore his rochet and stole, and he was clothed in a hair shirt, while blessed ashes were strewn round him. It had been his wish to die thus in sackcloth and ashes, like the Bishops of the primitive Church. They asked him if he wished to receive Extreme Unction. "Yes, immediately," he whispered.

He was passing rapidly away; when the Governor of Milan, the Don d' Arragona, Duke of Tierranueva, visited him, he could not speak; he could not even raise his hand to give his blessing.

According to the Ambrosian Rite, the Archpriest of the diocese is next in rank to the Archbishop; consequently it was his duty to administer the last Sacraments.

For on his death-bed Charles was true to his convictions, and died as he had lived, a faithful and



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## “Ecce venio”

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loyal son of Mother Church, and a strict observer of the decrees of the Council of Trent. They had placed an altar at the foot of the bed; on it were three pictures, representing Our Lord's Agony in the Garden, The dead Christ, and Christ in the Tomb. The Cardinal's eyes were riveted with ardent love on these representations of the Passion of our Redeemer.

“In the midst of my sufferings,” he whispered, “my greatest and only consolation is to meditate on the death of Jesus Christ.”

Father Bascapé and Father Adorno recited the prayers for the dying, while the sobs and cries of the mourners filled the room. Charles scarce heard them; the crucifix in his hands, his eyes fixed on the image of his Saviour, he gently breathed, “Ecce venio.” Then he lay quite still. He never spoke again. In a brief space life became extinct; the deep-set eyes closed, the colour faded from the face, the ardent soul of the reforming Cardinal had at last found rest.

“I have lived my life, and that which I have done  
May He within Himself make pure;  
For so the whole round earth is every way  
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.”

Charles Borromeo, Cardinal of Santa Prassede, and Archbishop of Milan, died on Saturday, November 3, 1584, at eight in the evening, aged forty-six years and thirty-two days.

“Extincta est lucerna in Israel,” cried Gregory XIII. when he heard the sad tidings, adding,

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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“Cardinal Borromeo was the glory of the Sacred College.”

One of its members, Cardinal Sirletti, voiced the unanimous opinion of all—indeed, of all Christendom—when he described the Cardinal of Santa Prassede in the following enthusiastic panegyric :

“Charles Borromeo was imprisoned in his earthly tenement, for his soul was in heaven. Man in form, angel by grace, model of Christian perfection, mirror of Bishops, honour of Cardinals, he was a strong bulwark against the wicked. The most brilliant ornament of the Church, he was the salt, the light, and as it were a fortress placed on Mount Sion ; he was the shining light mentioned in the Gospel. . . . He shone through his faith and his science, through his whole life and his whole administration. . . .

“His faith was the faith of a martyr. It was not his fault that he did not obtain the martyr’s crown. His science was as great as a learned professor’s, his life that of a confessor, and his government that of the Good Shepherd. He had the innocence of Abel, the honesty of Noah, the faith of Abraham, the obedience of Isaac, the energy of Jacob, the chastity of Joseph, the charity of Moses, the humility of David, the zeal of Elijah. . . . The Divine Spirit so powerfully strengthened his soul that it made it invincible and invulnerable. And in appearing at the Judgment-Seat he can say to Christ: ‘Lord,

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## “Ecce venio”

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Thou didst deliver to me five talents ; behold, I have gained other five over and above.’

“Surely Christ said unto him: ‘Well done, good and faithful servant ; because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things : enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.’”

Father Adorno, S.J., relates that, after assisting at the death of the Cardinal, he retired to the College of San Fedele, and, giving full vent to his grief, repeated over and over again : “Non est inventus similis illi qui conservaret legem Excelsi.”

While the worthy priest prayed and wept, his grief and weariness at last so overcame him that he slept, and in his sleep he had a strange dream. Charles Borromeo came to him, clothed in the pontifical vestments and shining with surpassing brilliancy. Father Adorno was astounded. “I thought you were dead, Eminence,” he gasped ; “how is it I see you alive and well ?”

A celestial radiance shone in the deep eyes of Charles : “Dominus mortificat et Dominus vivificat.” The saint replied : “I am among the blessed, and you will soon be with me.” And it came to pass as foretold in his vision, for in a very short time Father Adorno died at Genoa in much peace and holiness.

The funeral of the Archbishop of Milan took place on Wednesday, November 7. Cardinal Nicholas Sfondrato, Bishop of Cremona, who was later on Pope Gregory XIV., officiated. It

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## St. Charles Borromeo

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is impossible to give even a faint idea of the grief of the Milanese, or of the splendour and pomp of the ceremonies. The body of the saint was interred, according to his wish, under the steps leading to the choir, and the following inscription composed by him was placed over it :

“ Charles, Cardinal of the title of Santa Prassede, chose during life this spot for his tomb, desiring that the clergy, the people, and the devout female sex, may remember him often in their prayers.”

Many of us have visited the inner sanctuary in the crypt of the Duomo in which Charles Borromeo sleeps his last sleep. The body reposes in a silver coffin, the gift of Philip IV. There we can gaze upon the worn face and attenuated figure of the reforming Cardinal. It is clothed in magnificent pontifical vestments, covered with gold and silver and precious stones. Gold and silver and gorgeous ornaments cover the walls of his shrine, and the motto of his House, “ Humilitas,” is blazoned in Gothic characters. It shines in gold and in silver, it is sculptured in marble, cast in bronze, and embroidered in silk ; and he—he who loved poverty and contemned riches, who gave all he had to the poor, by a strange irony of Fate, lies in this magnificent sepulchre surrounded by priceless gems and clad in costly raiment.

“ What went you out to see ? A man clothed in soft garments ? Behold, they that are in costly apparel and live delicately are in the houses of kings.”

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## “ Ecce venio ”

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Charles Borromeo lies in the superb House of the King of Kings, in that glorious temple he helped to beautify, and from which he drove the buyers and sellers—the splendid Duomo of Milan that he purified and chastened from the pomp and glory of men, consecrating it once and for all wholly and solely to the glory and service of the Most High.

The process of the canonization of Charles Borromeo was commenced by Clement VIII. in 1604, and completed by Paul V. in 1610, twenty-six years after his death. His feast is held on November 4. In November of this year (1910) the Church celebrated the tercentenary of the canonization of the greatest, yet the humblest, of orthodox reformers. His life was a short one; the restless, ardent soul wore out the frail body. “ Being made perfect in a short space, he fulfilled a long time.” His memory is inexpressibly dear to us; his work endures to the present day.

Kneeling before his shrine, we ask him to bless and intercede for us, that like him we may keep the law of the Most High, may do gracious and noble deeds, may live at peace with God and men, and when our time comes may, like him, commend our souls to our Redeemer with the words, “ Ecce venio.”

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